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WHY GOD BECAME MAN: SAINT ANSELM, CUR DEUS HOMO, AND A  
RELIGIOUS CHALLENGE IN ANGLO-NORMAN ENGLAND

Adam C. Wolfe

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green  
State University in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

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August 2004

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## ABSTRACT

James Forse, Advisor

The study of Saint Anselm has been marked by a profound duality. Anselm's great contributions to the history of ideas have been the province of philosophers and theologians, while historians have concentrated on his actions as monk, abbot, and Archbishop of Canterbury during the Gregorian Reform. Anselm's life was theology in action, and yet no historian has fully explored the possibility that Anselm's policies as head of the Catholic Church in England were the natural outgrowth of his religious convictions and theology interacting with the world. Scarcely one year after his consecration as archbishop, Anselm was faced with a conflicting allegiance to king and pope at the Council of Rockingham in 1095. Anselm's evolving ideas on what was owed to Caesar and what to Christ, as well as the role of obedience in the redemption of humanity, spurred on his theological development, culminating in *Cur Deus Homo*, the Christ-theodicy of why God became Man. Thus, it was no accident that Anselm wrote one of his most brilliant theological works in the midst of his conflict with the English crown. This thesis examines the evolution of Anselm's ideas on secular and spiritual authority in light of the Council of Rockingham, demonstrating that Anselm's theology provided the framework for his policies and that the conflicts he faced as archbishop enriched his theological development.

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"Mankind possesses no better guide to conduct than the knowledge of the past."

Polybius, Histories

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- AABC      *Anselm: Aosta, Bec and Canterbury*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.
- ANS      *Anglo-Norman Studies X: Proceedings of the Battle Conference*. Edited by R. Allen Brown. Wolfeboro, NH: The Boydell Press, 1988.
- ASC      *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Translated by M. J. Swanton. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Barlow      Barlow, Frank. *William Rufus*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983.
- Cantor      Cantor, Norman F. *Church, Kingship, and Lay Investiture in England, 1089-1135*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958.
- CDH<sup>1</sup>      Anselm. *Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Janet Fairweather, in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*. Edited by Brian Davies and G. R. Evans. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Ep. (Epp.)      Anselm. *The Letters of Saint Anselm of Canterbury*, 3 vols. Translated by Walter Fröhlich. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1990-94. Cited by epistle number.
- HN      Eadmer. *History of Recent Events in England: Historia Novorum in Anglia*. Translated by Geoffrey Bosanquet. London: The Cresset Press, 1964. Cited by the Rolls Series edition page numbers.
- Schmitt      Anselm. *Sancti Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia*. Edited by F. S. Schmitt. 6 vols.: vol. 1, Seckau, Germany; vol. 2: Rome, 1940; vols. 3-6: Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946-61.
- Southern, Anselm      Southern, R. W. *Saint Anselm and His Biographer: A Study of Monastic Life and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963.

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<sup>1</sup> References to *Cur Deus Homo* or any other work by Anselm will be indicated first by book and chapter (e.g. CDH I.12), then by the volume and page of the Schmitt edition (e.g. 2:70), followed by the page number of the Oxford Classics collection of Anselm's works upon from which the English translation was taken (e.g. p. 285).

- Southern, R. W. *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- VA Eadmer. *The Life of St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury [Vita Anselmi]*. Translated and edited by R. W. Southern. New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962. Cited by Southern's page numbers.
- Vaughn, Sally. *Anselm of Bec and Robert of Meulan: The Innocence of the Dove and the Wisdom of the Serpent*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987.
- Vaughn, Sally. "St. Anselm of Canterbury: the philosopher-saint as politician." *Journal of Medieval History* 1, no. 3 (1975): 279-306.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### *A Crucial Letter*

In the summer of 1105, when Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, was in his second exile, he received a letter from Gilbert Crispin, abbot of Westminster. For more than two years, Anselm had been absent from England, and he was then at the center of lengthy negotiations between a pope determined that secular rulers not violate canonical election and a king who was equally determined not to sacrifice the customs of his father, William the Conqueror. England suffered hard without its archbishop, and in a poem sent to Anselm, Gilbert Crispin told the archbishop of moral decay and the oppression of the church by powerful magnates. Addressing Anselm as the absent shepherd, he warned him of the “cunning enemy” with “his wolfish wrath” who was destroying the flock; “realize that there are many wolves within,” he added. This poem was not simply a passionate plea for Anselm to return to England; it was an indictment of his absence.

Speaking of the Lord’s sheep, Abbot Gilbert warned:

The one who entrusted them to you,  
I say,  
will want them back,  
for everyone seeks what  
he has entrusted to others....  
No one denies that  
what is due must be repaid  
and so you must fear.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ep. 366.

The stern language Gilbert used here, one of duty and fear, of a debt that must be repaid, recalled the central argument of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, the Christ-theodicy of why God became Man.<sup>3</sup> This was no coincidence, for not only had Gilbert Crispin debated Jewish scholars in London on this subject and written his own work, but, as Richard Southern suggests, it is more than likely that it was a topic of discussion when Anselm stayed with the abbot in the fall of 1092.<sup>4</sup> Regardless of the extent of Gilbert Crispin's direct effect on *Cur Deus Homo*, in this letter he was unmistakably speaking the language of that work to its very author. As Anselm had stated therein, "...To sin is nothing other than not to give God what is owed to Him."<sup>5</sup> Anselm's duty to God was the same as any other man, to give the Creator what was owed Him, but as head of the church in England, this encompassed a great deal. Through him the church and all the souls within it might be preserved or led into ruin, and Gilbert had no qualms in warning Anselm that he must fear.

This letter links the ecclesiastical responsibilities of Anselm with the theological ideas for which he is rightly honored. It was no accident that Anselm wrote some of his most brilliant theological works, including *Cur Deus Homo*, in the midst of his conflict with the Anglo-Norman kings. This cross-fertilization of ideas began to emerge ten years before Gilbert Crispin's letter, at the Council of Rockingham, when Anselm was faced with a conflicting, dual allegiance to king and pope.

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Fröhlich pointed out this correlation in Anselm, *The Letters of Saint Anselm of Canterbury*, vol. 3 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1994), 116, n. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Southern, *Anselm*, 90-1; idem, *Portrait*, 200-1.

<sup>5</sup> CDH I.11; Schmitt 2:68; p. 283. I have taken the liberty of capitalizing the divine pronoun in order to aid clarity, since some of the translations in Davies and Evans follow this practice and others do not.

### *Introduction*

Alongside Augustine and Aquinas, Anselm (1033-1109) was one of the most important theologians of the Middle Ages, whose ontological argument for the existence of God is still hotly debated more than nine hundred years later. A monk and later abbot of a Norman monastery, it was Anselm's appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093 that set in motion the tumultuous conflicts with two kings of England which culminated in the English Investiture Contest. Although Anselm has long held a prominent place in the history of theology and philosophy, only relatively recently has there been a thorough discussion of his ecclesiastical policies as head or primate of the Catholic Church in England. Questions examined by medieval historians include Anselm's attitude toward the Gregorian Reform, why Anselm seemed to tolerate lay investiture under King William II but opposed it under King Henry I, whether Anselm actively sought or only reluctantly accepted the archiepiscopate,<sup>6</sup> and the nature of Anselm's concept of *rectus ordo*, or right order in the world.

Unfortunately, the study of Anselm is marked by a profound, almost schizophrenic duality. While philosophers continue to debate Anselm's thought, historians have concentrated on his actions as monk, abbot, and archbishop. Each discipline, to be sure, has its own proper methods, standards, and goals, and the often diachronic character of philosophical inquiry ill suits the purposes of historical investigation. This separation, however, has hindered more than helped modern attempts to understand Anselm. Anselm's life was theology in action, and one cannot wall off the

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<sup>6</sup> "Archiepiscopate" will refer to the office of archbishop, while "archbishopric" will indicate the lands and revenues attached to the office.

ideas of the theologian from the policies of the archbishop as if he were two men and not one.

The obedience Anselm professed as a monk played an increasingly large role in his theological writings and became the guiding principle of Anselm's life. When, therefore, Anselm was confronted with a dual allegiance—a conflicting obedience to king and pope—there was no one better suited to reflect on what was owed to Caesar and what to Christ. An examination of the complexities of obedience in Anselm's theology holds great promise in shedding light on the events of his archiepiscopate. Every one of the aforementioned historical questions would benefit from such an investigation.

Combining a study of the role of obedience in Anselm's theology with the political events which brought this question to the fore also offers a way out of a major impasse in Anselm studies. Some historians have used political expedience as the default explanation for Anselm's changing policies, presenting him as an often disingenuous ecclesiastic determined to head the English church.<sup>7</sup> Others have argued that Anselm was a pious monk completely unprepared for the challenges of being primate of Britain and whose policies lacked a coherent philosophy other than the sincere desire for abdication. The latter view, for the most part, takes Anselm at his word, while the former requires a significant subtextual reading, and as long as this division continues, two dramatically different Anselms will be presented to the world.

No attempt to reconcile these opposing views or to see continuity between the first and second halves of Anselm's archiepiscopate has fully explored the possibility that Anselm's policies were the natural outgrowth of his religious convictions and theology

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<sup>7</sup> "Church" will indicate the Catholic Church as a whole, while "church" will refer to a particular geographic subsection, e.g. "the English church" or "the Norman church."

interacting with the world. This lacuna in historical scholarship, or rather, the tendency of most historians to overlook the theological side of Anselm, is the reason for the present study.

An examination of Anselm's archiepiscopate as a whole, however, not to mention his theology, would be beyond the scope of this thesis. Accordingly, this discussion will be limited, with few exceptions, to Anselm's actions during the first half of his archiepiscopate and the theological speculation in which he was concurrently involved, since it is this period which first witnessed Anselm's attempts to come to grips with the challenges of Anglo-Norman politics. More specifically, by combining an investigation of the Council of Rockingham in 1095, which posed point-blank the question of whether a dual allegiance was possible, with an analysis of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God Became Man), this investigation will demonstrate that Anselm's theology provided the backdrop for the crucial decisions he made and, conversely, that the issues of his archiepiscopate spurred on his theological development. Anselm's experiences at the Council of Rockingham influenced his exploration of the role of obedience in the redemption of humanity, and this theological inquiry, culminating in *Cur Deus Homo*, enriched his understanding of his seemingly conflicting duties to the crown, the papacy, and God.

Although this thesis is grounded in the conviction that Anselm's theology is the proper place to begin any investigation of the ideas animating his ecclesiastical policies, to demonstrate this requires doing the opposite. Only by first showing the pitfalls into which most historians have fallen by not granting due scope to Anselm's theology can the necessity for another approach be demonstrated. Accordingly, this thesis will be divided



into three sections, the first reviewing the literature to date, the second investigating the Council of Rockingham itself, and the third analyzing the theology which alone gives deeper meaning to that historic event.

Chapter Two will address various interpretations of Anselm's archiepiscopate within the past half century, concentrating on, but not limited to, the views of Norman Cantor, Sir Richard Southern, and Sally Vaughn. Since each historian's approach to the Council of Rockingham is indelibly marked by his or her evaluation of Anselm's character, views, and policies, this chapter will be primarily a discussion of these broader issues, along with the degree to which each historian gives any attention to Anselm's theology.

The middle section is divided into two parts. Chapter Three will provide the historical background to the Council of Rockingham, including a broad overview of Anselm's first year as Archbishop of Canterbury, his relationship with William Rufus (William II), the reason why Anselm's own subordinates in the Anglo-Norman episcopate were his most determined opponents at the Council, and Anselm's views at that time on the ideal relationship between king and primate. The events of the council itself will be examined in Chapter Four. Since Eadmer, a monk at Canterbury and Anselm's secretary, is the principal source of information on those events, this chapter will begin with a discussion of Eadmer's reliability in reporting the statements and views of those present. The bulk of the chapter will be a discussion of each day of the council and a critical analysis of the various conclusions drawn by the historians from Chapter Two. Anselm's statements over the course of the Council of Rockingham, as well as his letters immediately before and after, raise as many questions as they answer. This

chapter will conclude, therefore, with a look at how the failure of historians to adequately assess Anselm's changing attitude toward the secular power is a consequence of not connecting his ecclesiastical decisions to his theology.

The third section, Chapter Five, will be an investigation of Anselm's theology, concentrating on the concept of obedience. Beginning with Anselm's earliest writings and proceeding to *Cur Deus Homo*, which Anselm was working on during these events, this chapter will explore the development of a central strand of thought in Anselm's theology, culminating in his theory of the Atonement. Combining this theological development with Anselm's evolving ideas on secular authority, this chapter will also draw upon his correspondence to show how the archbishop's views on obedience came to dominate his approach to kingship, the Gregorian Reform, and his own responsibilities as head of the English church. At the very least, the present study aspires to demonstrate that the investigation of Anselm's theology has the potential to enrich historical scholarship and to better frame the discussion of Anselm's view of the world.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### *Introduction*

The decisive question for historians regarding Anselm's archiepiscopate is one of character. Each historian has formed an opinion of Anselm and judged his actions in the light of this overarching view. There are, to be sure, numerous points of confluence even between those who disagree fundamentally on this matter, but character nonetheless proves to be the canvas upon which historians draw such dramatically different portraits of the same man. For this reason, no investigation of any one episode of Anselm's life could make sense of the widely divergent scholarly opinions without recourse to the broader issue of what sort of a man Anselm was. No incident demonstrates this better than Anselm's appointment to the archiepiscopal seat of Canterbury.

Twenty-six years after the Norman conquest of England, and six years after the death of William the Conqueror, Anselm crossed the Channel in order to supervise the founding of a monastery in England and to see to the business of his own monastery, Bec.<sup>8</sup> Anselm had first come to the Norman monastery of Bec in 1059, at the age of twenty-six, inspired by the fame of its prior, Lanfranc.<sup>9</sup> Although most of Lanfranc's students did not become monks, simply wanting to learn grammar, logic, and rhetoric,

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<sup>8</sup> HN 27-9; VA 63.

<sup>9</sup> VA 8.

Anselm joined the monastic order and became prior himself a few years later.<sup>10</sup> In 1078, with the death of Herluin, the monastery's founder, Anselm became abbot of Bec.<sup>11</sup> By the time of his fateful visit to England in the fall of 1092, Anselm was famed for his theological works as well as his popular prayers and meditations. While in England, he met privately with William Rufus, the Conqueror's son and now king of England, rebuking him for his moral failings.<sup>12</sup> In early 1093, Rufus fell deathly ill, and the nobles and bishops in attendance urged him to appoint a new archbishop to Canterbury. No one had held that position since the death of Lanfranc in 1089, and in the interim, Rufus had profited by farming out the lands of the archiepiscopate to the highest bidder.<sup>13</sup> His health was now so poor, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, that "he was everywhere declared dead; and in his affliction he promised many vows to God: to lead his own life righteously, and to grant peace and protection to God's ministers and never more again to sell them for money, and to have all just laws in his nation."<sup>14</sup> It was then, on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1093, that Rufus chose Anselm to be the new archbishop.<sup>15</sup>

According to Eadmer, a monk at Canterbury and an eyewitness to the events, "when Anselm heard this, he wore himself almost to death in his objections"; "he was aghast at this pronouncement and turned deadly pale."<sup>16</sup> He offered numerous

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<sup>10</sup> VA 10-11; Southern, *Portrait*, 29-31.

<sup>11</sup> VA 44.

<sup>12</sup> VA 63-4.

<sup>13</sup> Barlow, 234.

<sup>14</sup> ASC 1093; HN 30-2.

<sup>15</sup> VA 65; HN 37.

<sup>16</sup> VA 65; HN 32.

objections: he was too old; he had always shunned worldly affairs as a monk; he had obligations to the Duke of Normandy, the Archbishop of Rouen, and the monks of Bec.<sup>17</sup> Acclaimed by all, however, Anselm was dragged to the king's bedside while the king held out the pastoral staff, symbolic of a bishop's spiritual authority, and when he refused to open his clenched hand, the enthusiastic bishops tried to pry Anselm's fingers open while he "uttered groans of anguish for the pain which he suffered."<sup>18</sup> Finally, the bishops pressed the staff against his closed fingers, holding it there as Anselm received the archiepiscopate. Anselm was carried into the church to the sounds of the *Te Deum*, crying out *Nihil est, nihil est quod facitis*: "It is a nullity, a nullity, all this that you are doing."<sup>19</sup> Eadmer's account is borne out by a letter written shortly thereafter by Osbern, another monk at Canterbury, as well as by Anselm himself.<sup>20</sup>

While historian Sally Vaughn accepts this account for the most part, she believes that Anselm had in fact been maneuvering himself to become the head of the English church; thus, all his protests were "a strong reenactment of the age-old topos of unworthiness and reluctance" by a man "ever conscious of the importance of appearances."<sup>21</sup> Pretensions to otherworldliness were but a means to acquire the see of Canterbury, "the tastiest of all plums for ecclesiastical careerists," and his protestations "obviously enhanced his bargaining position."<sup>22</sup> In sharp contrast with this interpretation,

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<sup>17</sup> HN 33.

<sup>18</sup> HN 35.

<sup>19</sup> VA 65; HN 35-6.

<sup>20</sup> Epp. 149, 198.

<sup>21</sup> Sally Vaughn, *The Abbey of Bec and the Anglo-Norman State, 1034-1136* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 1981), 45-7; *Anselm*, 129.

historian Richard Southern concludes that Anselm “was being forced to turn from the contemplation of God and from teaching others in this, the highest activity open to human beings, in order to immerse himself in a life of frustrating activity. For Anselm, this was not promotion; it was his nearest approach to hell.”<sup>23</sup>

The opposite conclusions drawn by Southern and Vaughn are not due to a difference in the sources upon which they draw, for these are identical, nor is it simply a matter of emphasizing different texts. These two historians, who have written more about Anselm than anyone else, seem perplexed at this gulf between them. “What seems remarkable to me,” Vaughn remarks, “and apparently to Sir Richard as well, is that he and I can derive such different conclusions from virtually the same evidence.”<sup>24</sup> This dichotomy is by no means the only one in Anselm studies. Speaking of the movement in the late 11<sup>th</sup> and early 12<sup>th</sup> centuries to free the Church from secular control, Norman Cantor asserts that “whatever support the Gregorian reform movement had in England came from Anselm and his monastic disciples.”<sup>25</sup> C. Warren Hollister, on the other hand, is equally certain that Anselm had “no personal convictions” about the Gregorian Reform and “no particular taste for the Gregorian idea of a Church free of monarchical control.”<sup>26</sup> These historians, as well, draw upon the same body of evidence for Anselm, principally

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<sup>22</sup> Idem, *Anselm*, 129; “St. Anselm: Reluctant Archbishop?” *Albion* 6, no. 3 (1974): 246.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Southern, “Sally Vaughn’s Anselm: An Examination of the Foundations,” *Albion* 20, no. 2 (1988), 186-7.

<sup>24</sup> Vaughn, “Anselm: Saint and Statesman,” *Albion* 20, no. 2 (1988): 205.

<sup>25</sup> Norman Cantor, “The Crisis of Western Monasticism,” *The American Historical Review* 66, no. 1 (1960): 60.

<sup>26</sup> C. Warren Hollister, *Henry I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 122.

consisting of Eadmer's *Historia Novorum* and *Vita Anselmi*, as well as the 475 surviving letters of Anselm's correspondence.

In the following discussion of how these historians and others have viewed Anselm, two principle fault-lines will emerge, one centering on Anselm's relationship with the Gregorian Reform, the other reflecting the more fundamental yet nebulous question of Anselm's sincerity. Both, it will be seen, are questions of character and thus frame the way each historian approaches the Council of Rockingham, where Anselm stood against his own king and the great majority of his fellow bishops. There are as many Anselms as there are historians of Anselm, which itself alludes to the problem: as long as Anselm's actions are the province of historians, while the great body of his thought is relegated to philosophers and theologians, any attempt to understand Anselm will be partial and provisional, the more so to the extent that the historian ignore the theology which constitutes Anselm's lasting contribution to the Christian faith. Since these general considerations have framed each historian's views on Anselm, a discussion of the Council of Rockingham or any other episode of Anselm's archiepiscopate must be prefaced by what historians have had to say on the character of this man.

#### *Norman Cantor: Anselm as Gregorian*

The collection and publication of Anselm's complete works, in Latin, by the Benedictine scholar F. S. Schmitt from 1938 to 1951<sup>27</sup> fueled a great interest in Anselm, prompting numerous translations and new studies. What Jasper Hopkins dubs a post-war renaissance in the study of Anselm was most visible in two works which put Anselm at

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<sup>27</sup>See Schmitt. Vol. 6, an index, was completed in 1961.

center stage.<sup>28</sup> In 1958, Norman Cantor released *Church, Kingship, and Lay Investiture in England: 1089-1135*,<sup>29</sup> and five years later his erstwhile advisor at Oxford, the distinguished medievalist Sir Richard Southern, completed *Saint Anselm and his Biographer: A Study of Monastic Life and Thought, 1059-c.1130*.<sup>30</sup> As the contrasting range of years hints, Cantor concentrated on the ecclesiastical and political conflicts of the period, which came to a head after Archbishop Lanfranc's death in 1089, while Southern was more interested in the monastic background of Anselm, beginning in 1059, and his confrontation with the world of Anglo-Norman politics. Although there had been a few articles and books on Anselm prior to these two works,<sup>31</sup> Cantor and Southern were the first to create lasting portraits of the man which departed in significant respects from Eadmer's account.<sup>32</sup> At this early stage, the fundamental divergence in scholarly opinion concerned Anselm's views on the Gregorian Reform and the controversy over lay investiture.

Named after Pope Gregory VII (r. 1073-85), the Gregorian Reform was an international, decades-long effort to transform the Church to reflect a tremendous surge in lay piety and a reinvigorated monastic movement.<sup>33</sup> The Gregorian reformers sought,

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<sup>28</sup> Jasper Hopkins, *A Companion to the Study of St. Anselm* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), vii.

<sup>29</sup> See Cantor.

<sup>30</sup> See Southern, *Anselm*.

<sup>31</sup> See in particular Martin Rule's *The Life and Times of St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of the Britains*, 2 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., 1883).

<sup>32</sup> A more thorough discussion of Eadmer's reliability can be found at the beginning of the following chapter.

<sup>33</sup> For a general discussion of the Gregorian reform and the struggle over lay investiture, see Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), Gerd Tellenbach, *Church, State and*



among other things, to eradicate the practices of clerical marriage, simony (the buying of ecclesiastical office), and lay investiture.<sup>34</sup> It had been a widely accepted practice for kings to invest newly appointed bishops and abbots with Church lands, which the bishops would then hold in fief from the king. The ritual of lay investiture or investiture by laymen, however, usually made little distinction between the bishop's temporal lands and spiritual office, for it was common for the king to confer ring and staff, symbols of a bishop's pastoral authority, on the appointee, who would then swear an oath of fealty.<sup>35</sup> The objections of the Gregorians to this practice were in part theological, since the practice of lay investiture seemed to imply that the king held sacramental power, and partly political, since through investiture a lay ruler could exercise de facto control over episcopal appointments, thus subverting the process of canonical election.<sup>36</sup> At bottom, then, the Gregorian Reform was an attempt to free the Church from every kind of secular control and influence.

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*Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948), Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church & State, 1050-1300* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), 33-95, and Norman Cantor's own *The Civilization of the Middle Ages* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 243-76.

<sup>34</sup> All three of these prohibitions constituted goals of Anselm's during the second half of his archiepiscopate; upon his return to England in 1100, he introduced the Council of Rome's decrees against lay investiture and homage, and the Council of Westminster in 1102 specifically condemned simony, clerical marriage, and other practices. See HN 120, 143; VA 127; Epp. 213, 214, 257.

<sup>35</sup> "The ring symbolized the marriage of Christ with the church, his bride. . . and the crosier [staff] symbolized the care of souls. The presentation of these symbols, investiture, was regarded as the conferral of a sacrament, and therefore laymen could not confer sacraments, not even kings, once their office had been denuded of its theocratic foundation"; Blumenthal, 165. See also Tellenbach, 109-11.

<sup>36</sup> As early as 1058, the prominent Gregorian Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida condemned lay investiture on the grounds that the ring and staff were sacramental symbols and that the transfer of property in exchange for office constituted simony. At this early stage, the radical Gregorians saw lay investiture as an instance of simony, not as the central focus of their efforts; see Blumenthal, 89-91. Blumenthal argues that the later prohibition of lay investiture by Gregory VII in 1078 was the result, not the cause, of Gregory's clash with Emperor Henry IV of Germany; Blumenthal, 120-1.

In England, lay investiture did not become an issue until 1100, when Anselm returned from his first exile with the decrees of the Council of Rome, which he had attended.<sup>37</sup> This council had renewed the condemnations<sup>38</sup> of both lay investiture and rendering homage to lay rulers, and the resulting struggle between Anselm and the new king, Henry I (r. 1100-35) led to Anselm's second exile. The English Investiture Contest formally came to an end in 1107, when Henry gave up investiture in return for papal acknowledgement that homage, a principal means of establishing loyalty in feudal society, could continue.<sup>39</sup> One of the most important results of the Investiture Contest, which in Germany ended in 1122 with the Concordat of Worms, was a clearer separation in Western Europe between the spiritual and the temporal, between the Church and secular authority.<sup>40</sup>

In the opening chapter of Norman Cantor's work on the English Investiture Contest, he speaks of "four world-revolutions" that have shaped the West, the three later

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<sup>37</sup> HN 112-14; VA 115; Epp. 213, 214.

<sup>38</sup> The condemnation of homage made its appearance at the Council of Clermont in 1095; Blumenthal, 139-40.

<sup>39</sup> HN 185-6; Ep. 430. This compromise was based on a meeting between Anselm and Henry at l'Aigle in 1105; see Epp. 388, 389.

<sup>40</sup> Tellenbach, 124-5; Blumenthal, 172-3. Throughout this discussion, "secular authority" will designate lay rulers, including kings and emperors as well as the nobility. The use of the word "state," as in the conflict between Church and state, is tempting but decidedly anachronistic when speaking of this time period. The Latin terms *sacerdotium* and *regnum* communicate the distinction between the two powers but are too unwieldy for frequent use. Although one could argue that the use of the term "secular" itself would constitute a bias in favor of Gregorian views and against proponents of theocratic kingship, the objection is ultimately irrelevant, for Anselm recognized such a distinction, and it is his perceived obligations to the two spheres which is the focus of this study. In his letters, he spoke of *saeculares* (secular men) as distinguished from those inside the Church (see Epp. 101, 450), and he ascribed to the views of Pope Gelasius I (Tierney, 13) in distinguishing between the *potestas* of lay rulers (Epp. 249, 319) and the *auctoritas* of ecclesiastics (Epp. 44, 66, 214, 388). In *Cur Deus Homo*, most apropos to this study, he spoke of *terranae potestates* to indicate temporal authorities, who execute secular justice on earth (CDH I.12; Schmitt 2:70; p. 285). See also Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester's letter to Anselm, wherein he urges the new archbishop to defend the holy Church (*sanctam ecclesiam*) and to have no fear of the secular power (*saecularis potentiae*); Ep. 171.

ones three being “the Protestant Revolution of the sixteenth century, the liberal revolution of the eighteenth century, [and] the Communist revolution of the twentieth.”<sup>41</sup> The first of these world-revolutions was the Investiture Contest, whose leaders sought “an ideal new order” marked by the “complete freedom of the church from control by the state, the negation of the sacramental character of kingship, and the domination of the papacy over secular rulers. . . .”<sup>42</sup> Cantor characterized leaders within the Church, and often those outside it, by their attitudes toward this revolution in ideas. Anselm himself emerges from Cantor’s narrative as unmistakably Gregorian, a theater commander leading the monastic militia of Christ in England.

What is most striking about Cantor’s painstakingly researched work is what it fails to cover, namely, Anselm’s background before he became archbishop; it is as if Anselm were born at the age of sixty, ready to assume the primacy in England. Cantor devotes attention neither to Anselm’s vocation as a monk nor to his theology. Part of this is due to the sheer scope of Cantor’s overall narrative, which mitigates this discrepancy somewhat. In part, however, Cantor’s lack of attention to Anselm’s first sixty years is a subtle argument that it was Anselm’s Gregorian ideology, not his Benedictine background or theological ideas, that was the decisive criterion in the conflict. As to the origins of that ideological influence on Anselm, Cantor merely points to Anselm’s friendship with Archbishop Hugh of Lyons, a papal legate and a leading Gregorian.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Cantor, 6-7.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 7. The latest edition of Cantor’s *The Civilization of the Middle Ages* continues to follow, almost verbatim, his discussion of the course of this revolution in *Church, Kingship, and Lay Investiture*; see Cantor, 6-9; idem, *Civilization*, 244-6.

<sup>43</sup> Cantor, 59.

With this assumption firmly in place, the Anselm which Cantor presents comes across, virtually by necessity, as a politically astute and powerful player in the controversies of his day. The bishops of England, who supported Anselm's appointment as archbishop, erroneously thought that this holy man would not interfere with the customary way of things: "They anticipated that Anselm would pray to God for them and that they would take charge of his secular business."<sup>44</sup> Anselm's actions, however, would soon make clear that he "had a considerable knowledge of secular affairs."<sup>45</sup> Despite the opposition of most of the Anglo-Norman bishops, Anselm would become "the leader of the Gregorian revolution in England."<sup>46</sup>

Cantor does not draw a sharp line between Anselm's expressed desire for religious reform in England, to include holding an ecclesiastical council,<sup>47</sup> and the Gregorian opposition to the traditional relationship between the Church and lay rulers. Thus, according to Cantor, as early as one year into his archiepiscopate, Anselm had definitively broken with the traditional control exerted by Norman rulers over the church,<sup>48</sup> and his policies thereafter were thoroughly Gregorian: "whatever support the Gregorian reform movement had in England came from Anselm and his monastic disciples."<sup>49</sup> This was not necessarily a new idea; seven years earlier, for instance,

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>47</sup> HN 48-9; Ep. 176.

<sup>48</sup> See the next chapter for a discussion of the traditional rights of Norman dukes over the local church.

<sup>49</sup> Cantor, 77; idcm, "The Crisis of Western Monasticism," *The American Historical Review* 66, no. 1 (1960): 60.

historian Austin Poole had spoken of Anselm's "fixed resolved to enforce the Gregorian programme," but he had been speaking of Anselm's return from his first exile, in 1100.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, Cantor maintains that Anselm had begun his archiepiscopate, in 1093, as "an advocate of at least the more moderate Gregorian reform doctrines. . . ."<sup>51</sup>

Despite what Cantor sees as Anselm's determination to carry out the Gregorian program in England, he was nevertheless willing to believe the account of Anselm's appointment given by Eadmer, Anselm's companion and biographer, an account that emphasizes the abbot's great reluctance to become archbishop. Obedience was "Anselm's cardinal principle of ethics," and so he submitted to the acclamation of the bishops and the laity as the will of God.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, the importance of obedience is necessarily attenuated in Cantor's account, for Anselm had already embraced the Gregorian policies he was duty-bound to enforce.

The lack of nuance in Cantor's examination of Anselm's relationship to Gregorian ideas arises, above all, from taking Eadmer at his word on a critical point where there is good reason to doubt the chronicler. While Eadmer announced, at the beginning of the *Historia Novorum*, that the great theme of Anselm's archiepiscopate was the conflict over lay investiture,<sup>53</sup> this was in fact an issue that only arose after Anselm

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<sup>50</sup> Austin Lane Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta, 1087-1216* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 177.

<sup>51</sup> Cantor, 41.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>53</sup> HN 2.

returned from his exile in 1100, when Henry I was king.<sup>54</sup> Southern addresses this question directly, but presently it is enough to note how Cantor's wholesale appropriation of Eadmer's theme naturally led to the image of Anselm one finds in *Church, Kingship, and Lay Investiture*. If Anselm was, as Cantor maintains, determined to extend the Gregorian reform to England, then he had to have been quite capable of holding his own in the higher circles of power; to believe otherwise would be to make the same mistake as the bishops who supported his appointment. The shortcomings of Cantor's approach regarding Anselm's initial attitude toward the secular power will be more fully addressed in Chapter Three.

*Richard Southern: Anselm as Saint*

Cantor's book was originally his doctoral dissertation; at Oxford, his advisor was Richard Southern, perhaps the most important medievalist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cantor later recalled that at one of their first meetings, when he was trying to get Southern to be his advisor, the distinguished medievalist bluntly told him, "You really don't understand Anselm."<sup>55</sup> Over the course of the year Cantor spent at Oxford, they "argued incessantly about the medieval church," Cantor reveals:

Essentially he had a much more favorable view than I of the church because he focused on the devotional, liturgical, and intellectual side and didn't think the political side, especially papal politics, meant very much. I then took the opposite view, under [medievalist Joseph Reese] Strayer's influence. Now [1991] I would say Southern was 75 percent in the right.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> See Ep. 213, where Pope Paschal II instructs Anselm to implement the recent decrees against lay investiture and homage, and Ep. 214, where Anselm first reports that upon hearing the decrees, "the King and his nobles would not accept it under any circumstances." See also HN 120; VA 127.

<sup>55</sup> Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991), 344.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

Given such a difference in outlook, it was inevitable that when Richard Southern came around to writing his own work on Anselm, he would present a very different picture. Five years after Cantor's published dissertation and ten years after his own pioneering work, *The Making of the Middle Ages*,<sup>57</sup> the Oxford scholar published a biography of Anselm.<sup>58</sup> Focusing on Anselm's monastic vocation, Southern emphasizes the formative nature of the three decades Anselm had spent in a Norman monastery before becoming archbishop.

Southern devoted most of *St. Anselm and His Biographer* to investigating Anselm's monastic life and his theological works, including no less than forty-five pages devoted to *Cur Deus Homo* alone. Analyzing Anselm's correspondence, theological treatises, and other writings, Southern concludes that prior to becoming archbishop, "Anselm's life for over thirty years was one of monastic peace," a peace only occasionally interrupted by the inevitable disagreements and material concerns of a monastery.<sup>59</sup> "Nothing could be more peaceful," Southern writes, "or more withdrawn from the storms and controversies, which, in the realm of government, were rending the Empire and Papacy of Henry IV and Gregory VII, or which, in the realm of theology, in 1079 produced the final condemnation of Berengar of Tours."<sup>60</sup>

While Cantor gives lip service to the role of obedience in Anselm's life, the concept dominates Southern's entire narrative: "The principle of obedience to authority

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<sup>57</sup> Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953).

<sup>58</sup> Southern, *Anselm*.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-8.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

was the foundation of his life and thought; and by this he did not mean obedience as a code of external action and mental submission as men ordinarily interpret the word. He meant a loyalty intensely conceived and meticulously observed.”<sup>61</sup> Neither Anselm’s theology nor his actions can be understood without recognizing the “passionate intensity” with which Anselm embraced the obedience at the heart of the Benedictine Rule.<sup>62</sup> From this starting point, Southern concludes, “we approach Anselm’s political career with the strong expectation that obedience will prove to be the main theme of his archiepiscopate.”<sup>63</sup>

Accordingly, Anselm’s resistance to the encroachments of the Anglo-Norman kings and his obedience to the papacy sprung from his monastic mindset, not, as Cantor suggests, from a well thought-out policy. In fact, Southern points out, Anselm could very well have been ignorant of the principal decrees of Gregorian popes until well into his tenure as archbishop, due to any lack of any “regular means of communicating decisions” from the papacy to the local level.<sup>64</sup> He argues that Eadmer (and by extension Cantor) had back-dated the conflict over lay investiture and Anselm’s concern with it to the beginning of Anselm’s archbishopric (1093-4), whereas it was only in 1099 that Anselm learned, at an ecclesiastical council in Rome, that “it was his duty to renounce these practices.”<sup>65</sup> Southern does accept Eadmer’s account of Anselm’s opposition to

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 310.



becoming archbishop, which accords with Anselm's own letters, a portrait of a man ill at ease in the secular world and determined to avoid it if at all possible.<sup>66</sup>

"Anselm's most persistent and powerful impulse during these years," Southern writes, "was to find a way of laying down the archbishopric."<sup>67</sup> Failing that, Anselm intended to defend the rights of Canterbury as best he could and to convene an ecclesiastical council to correct the discipline of the English church. Although William Rufus and Anselm clashed on many issues, Southern regards these disputes as "trivial and inconclusive, and the antagonists drifted from one point to another without reaching an issue on which a serious argument could take place."<sup>68</sup> It was during his exile under Rufus that Anselm's ideas began to change, when he heard Gregorian decrees promulgated at the councils of Bari in 1098 and Rome in 1099.<sup>69</sup> He upheld these decrees when he returned to England under the new king, Henry, but even then he was more concerned with defending the lands and privileges of Canterbury than with the Gregorian program. Anselm dutifully pronounced anathema against laymen who invested churches and the bishops who received them or did homage; nevertheless, "he acted not on his own behalf, but as an instrument of the pope to whom he owed his obedience."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Regarding Anselm's opposition to becoming archbishop, see Epp. 148, 149, 156, 159, 160, and 198.

<sup>67</sup> Southern, *Anselm*, 151.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 165, 176.

Southern's approach is a neo-romanticist one, a view disposed, as Cantor observes, to the benign and harmonious," evoking "the more emotional and intellectual dimensions of ecclesiastical and closely related secular culture."<sup>71</sup> To Southern, Anselm "was no politician and he had no political views of a systematic kind. As a monk he had turned his back on the world. . . ."<sup>72</sup> Far from pursuing a coherent policy, let alone a Gregorian one, Anselm was primarily concerned with finding a pretext to resign his position as archbishop and, as long as he held the office, he sought to reform the discipline of the English church.<sup>73</sup>

The strength of Southern's approach is its insight into the devotional and theological aspects of Anselm's life which dominated his world. Southern possesses an understanding of Anselm's theology rare for a historian, but by erecting a wall between the quasi-secular world of ecclesiastical politics and the spiritual world of pious reflection, he could not recognize how deeply those reflections could guide Anselm's policies as archbishop. The Council of Rockingham forced Anselm to reflect on his concept of obedience just as earnestly as he did in his exploration of the Atonement in *Cur Deus Homo*, and it was no accident that Anselm's "greatest intellectual achievement," in Southern's judgment, came to fruition in the wake of Rockingham.<sup>74</sup>

### *Frank Barlow: Anselm Divided*

While Cantor views Anselm as eminently capable of handling himself at the summit of ecclesiastical power in England, he has not cast doubt on the man's essential

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<sup>71</sup> Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages*, 354, 357-8.

<sup>72</sup> Southern, *Anselm*, 122.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

piety and sincerity. The same cannot be said for Frank Barlow. While Barlow has not written a work specifically devoted to Anselm or the conflict over investiture in England, it is possible to glean from his many works<sup>75</sup> on that period a portrait of Anselm that substantially differs from those of Cantor and Southern. Barlow's view of Anselm, moreover, anticipates the more nuanced theories of Sally Vaughn, whose impact on Anselmian studies has been substantial. Vaughn's conviction that power, not piety, characterized the Church and all within it must be viewed in the context of Barlow's deconstruction of the Church and religious sentiment in general.

In *The English Church, 1066-1154*, Barlow explores the first century after the Norman Conquest, revealing in the process a highly fractured view of the medieval Church. He concedes the indispensable social functions performed solely by the Church in providing education, medical care, social welfare, places for corporate worship, a monastic refuge for the disabled, and an educated class of administrators.<sup>76</sup> Beneath this outward piety, however, lurked a more menacing reality that evidently rings truer for Barlow: "In an economic sense the whole church depended on the sins of the people, and when guilt gave out police action could take over."<sup>77</sup> Despite the lofty goals professed by the monastic movement, it was, in a very real sense, a sham: "Salvation had its price and

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<sup>75</sup> Frank Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England, 1042-1216* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1999 [first edition 1955]); *The English Church, 1066-1154* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1979); *William Rufus* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983). See also Barlow's *Thomas Becket* (London: Widenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), a full-length exercise in deconstructing a medieval saint.

<sup>76</sup> Barlow, *The English Church*, 25-6.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

the monks were there to extract the entrance fee and to secure for the purchaser his due reward.”<sup>78</sup>

The unresolved, schizophrenic tension of Barlow’s Church is reflected in his depiction of Anselm. On the one hand, Anselm “never preferred convenience to principle,” and “he had the most scrupulous conscience.”<sup>79</sup> To the great majority of Anglo-Norman bishops and abbots, fully integrated into the same power structure as the lay magnates, Anselm appeared as an interloper, “inciting the people against married priests and maintaining that his obedience to the pope came before his duties to the king. . . .”<sup>80</sup> Barlow appears at times to even admire Anselm, concluding quite favorably:

It was his aristocratic fearlessness, his deep theological learning, the logical clarity of his thought, and his absolute obedience to moral principles and ecclesiastical superiors, together with his genuine lack of temporal ambition, which made him an uncomfortable man with whom to do business.<sup>81</sup>

On the other hand, Barlow avers, “Anselm was not an impractical idealist,” for “he understood worldly affairs perfectly well.” “Eadmer exaggerates his other-worldliness,” as did Anselm himself, for he “had to invoke the highest moral justifications for his anti-social behaviour.”<sup>82</sup> Thus far Barlow is not all that distant from Cantor. In his biography of William Rufus, however, Barlow asserts that it “cannot be doubted” that Anselm “searched out something in his attitude to worldly success of

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 315.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 287, 315.

which he was ashamed.”<sup>83</sup> Why one cannot doubt that Anselm was a hypocrite is something Barlow does not address, for it does not appear in any of Anselm’s letters or works. In the final analysis, the evidence is less important here than the ideological conviction: Barlow has already arrived at the conclusion that self-interested power lay at the dark heart of the medieval Church, so if Anselm or any other individual appears not to have this more sordid side, it is only because the evidence has disappeared.

In one and the same work, *The Feudal Kingdom of England, 1042-1216*, Barlow waxes on about Anselm’s saintly qualities—“that integrity, that natural holiness, and that moral authority”—and yet states that “he could play the holy innocent.”<sup>84</sup> Whereas Anselm *was* the holy innocent for Southern, for Barlow, he merely *played* the holy innocent. The unanswered questions posed by Barlow’s portrait of Anselm ultimately have less to do with the constraints of space in his general works than with his fracturing of Anselm into two halves, one the saint, the other an anti-social hypocrite. Barlow’s accusations remain mere suggestions, but even though he has not deconstructed Anselm, his self-confident assertions regarding the ubiquity of hypocrisy lay the groundwork for the one who has.

### *Sally Vaughn: Anselm Deconstructed*

It has fallen to Sally Vaughn to bring a deeper dimension to Barlow’s deconstructionist suggestions. In a 1974 article which appeared in *Albion*, a scholarly journal of English history, Vaughn released the first salvo of what would be an all-out attack on Southern’s Anselm. “St. Anselm: Reluctant Archbishop?” presents Anselm as

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<sup>83</sup> Barlow, *William Rufus*, 302.

<sup>84</sup> Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England*, 247, 126.

a man who felt that he should be archbishop of Canterbury and who had been groomed by Lanfranc to be his successor. "For Anselm to express a desire for such an office," however, "would be to compromise his saintly reputation and to cast himself in the mold of an ambitious courtier rather than as a servant of the Church."<sup>85</sup> A further advantage of Anselm's protests was that "they obviously enhanced his bargaining position," enabling him to demand that lands belonging to Canterbury would be returned, that he would be Rufus' principal religious advisor, and that Urban would be recognized as pope in England.<sup>86</sup> Although Vaughn carefully notes that Anselm's "desire was not for personal enrichment but for a higher service to God," the abbot comes off poorly in her retelling of the events leading to his consecration, a man who cultivated friendships for years "as potential supporters of his accession to the archbishopric."<sup>87</sup>

A year later, in an article for the *Journal of Medieval History*, Vaughn fleshed out her accusations, relying once more on the premise that Anselm was not as reluctant as

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<sup>85</sup> Vaughn, "Reluctant Archbishop," 241.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 246.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 250, 242. Vaughn's first article on Anselm reveals one of her trademark methods, namely, contentious renderings of Latin that suggest the meaning she wants to find. She quotes from a letter Anselm wrote shortly after his appointment: "Anselm expresses the doubt he felt about what course he should follow, and 'what form of aid from my friends I ought properly to seek. . . . I chose a plan [*elegi consilium*] that—just as it is written 'throw your thought into the Lord'—I might unite myself totally to the divine governance and plan [*me committerem divino moderamini et consilio*]." He seems to be confiding in his fellow ecclesiastic," Vaughn concludes, "that indeed he worked to attain the office of archbishop, following a plan and attributing it to the Divine Will"; *ibid.*, 249. Vaughn chooses to render *consilium* as "plan," but it can also be rendered "counsel," and the latter translation would accord more with Anselm's previous words about seeking aid from his friends. In Walter Fröhlich's translation of Anselm's letters, this passage of Ep. 159 reads, "Since I did not wish to offend God in any way, I was completely uncertain as to what I should choose and what help I should especially ask from my friends. In this situation I chose the only advice which was, as far as I could see, the safest: to entrust myself entirely to divine government and counsel—as it is written: Cast your thought on the Lord." What is perhaps most revealing in Vaughn's method is what she omits: in the next sentence, Anselm states, "Consequently I did whatever I could do without sin [*sine peccato*] to thwart the plans of those who elected me, and I did nothing that I could avoid doing without sin to let it come about." See also notes 88 and 123 below for other misleading excerpts and translations.

Eadmer (or Southern) would have one believe.<sup>88</sup> On the basis of two letters, Vaughn concludes that Anselm pursued friendships “not only for their own sake but also as a distinct political methodology.”<sup>89</sup> Accepting Southern’s contention that obedience was fundamental to Anselm, she nevertheless insinuates that it was so as a means to a political end: “Thus the concept of obedience . . . was of prime importance to his political methodology within the government of the church. With obedience came control, and with control came reform.”<sup>90</sup> Anselm deftly timed his political maneuvers: “Throughout Rufus’ reign, Anselm had repeatedly calculated his efforts toward reform to coincide with moments of political crisis when the king needed his support.”<sup>91</sup> In sharp contrast to Southern, Vaughn concludes that Anselm “may well have been the most astute politician in the Anglo-Norman state.”<sup>92</sup>

Vaughn continued her analysis of Anselm in another article in 1980, and the following year, she released *The Abbey of Bec and the Anglo-Norman State, 1034-*

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<sup>88</sup> Vaughn, “Politician,” 285.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 284. These letters are Ep. 9, to the monk Hernost, and Ep. 165, to the monks of Bec. Regarding the first, no words evince the intention Vaughn ascribes to Anselm, and one wonders what she could have meant. Regarding the second, Anselm advises the monks of Bec, now that he is no longer their abbot but Archbishop of Canterbury: “Remember too how I always used to gain friends for the church of Bec: following this example, hasten to gain friends for yourselves from all sides by exercising the good deed of hospitality, dispensing generosity to all men, and when you do not have the opportunity of doing good works, by according the gift of a kind word. Never consider that you have enough friends, but whether rich or poor, let them all be bound to you by brotherly love. This will be to the advantage of your church [*ad vestrae utilitatem proficere*] and promote the welfare of those you love.” If this is, as Vaughn suggests, a distinct political methodology deliberately crafted, its aim must have been the salvation of humanity, for it seems like nothing so much as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-7:27). Indeed, Vaughn’s insinuation would appear to condemn with equal force the One who said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:16) For a debate on the translation of the words *ad vestrae utilitatem proficere* in this letter, see Southern, “Sally Vaughn’s Anselm: An Examination of the Foundations,” *Albion* 20, no. 2 (1988), 189-91; Vaughn, “Anselm: Saint and Statesman,” *Albion* 20, no. 2, 219-20.

<sup>90</sup> Vaughn, “Politician,” 285.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

1136.<sup>93</sup> Here, she distances herself from both Southern and Cantor: "St. Anselm . . . was more than the unwilling, maladroit politician whom Southern portrays, and more than a mere agent for the investiture policy of [Pope] Paschal, as Cantor believes."<sup>94</sup> Whereas Southern expounds upon the devotional, liturgical, and theological aspects of monasticism, Vaughn chooses to focus on "the secular side of the monastic life."<sup>95</sup> She suggests that Anselm had in fact been maneuvering himself to become primate of England in order to carry out a monastically-oriented program of reform, albeit not a Gregorian one.<sup>96</sup>

Since Anselm never claimed to hold a position superior to the king, and since his words suggest that his ideal was one of co-rule over the Christian community,<sup>97</sup> Vaughn concludes that Anselm was not a Gregorian.<sup>98</sup> The archbishop recognized, however, that "the papal reforms could be useful in strengthening the primacy of Canterbury."<sup>99</sup> The many advantages Anselm stood to gain by supporting the Gregorian reform included being "personally independent of the royal power," securing the obedience of the bishops solely to himself instead of the king, and preserving the lands held by Canterbury against

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<sup>93</sup> Sally Vaughn, "St. Anselm and the English Investiture Controversy reconsidered," *Journal of Medieval History* 6, no. 1 (1980); idem, *The Abbey of Bec*, vii.

<sup>94</sup> Vaughn, "St. Anselm," 62.

<sup>95</sup> Vaughn, *The Abbey of Bec*, vii.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>97</sup> See Chapter Three for a discussion of Anselm's ideas on the proper relationship between king and primate.

<sup>98</sup> Vaughn, "St. Anselm," 63, 65.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 68.



secular encroachments. Vaughn does concede that Anselm also had “no choice but to enforce the papal bans which had been said in his presence.”<sup>100</sup>

Despite her rejection of the idea that Anselm was a Gregorian, Vaughn’s view of Anselm owes much to Cantor: both of them see Anselm as politically astute and experienced in secular matters; both scholars reject, to a greater or lesser degree, the image of Anselm that emerges from Eadmer’s chronicle and Southern’s biography, an image of Anselm as a monk out of place. Whereas Cantor, however, proceeds from the axiomatic assertion that Anselm was a Gregorian, Vaughn rejects both the assertion and the method. In Vaughn’s analysis, the role of personal motive and secret ambition become a critical one, for she needed a convincing argument to show that Anselm had in fact been seeking this position of authority despite all his protestations to the contrary.

In 1987, Vaughn continued her efforts in a full-length study, *Anselm of Bec and Robert of Meulan*, which tied together all that strands in her earlier work.<sup>101</sup> Rather than the disinterested, pious monk and reluctant archbishop, Vaughn’s Anselm was an articulate politician with an acute mind, consciously taking the steps that would vault him into one of the most important ecclesiastical positions in Europe. Anselm was obsessed with ruling Canterbury, and despite the genuineness of his religious feelings—which Vaughn still concedes—he was determined to secure his election by any means, to include using a deliberately built-up “friendship network” and feigning reluctance as part of his “‘holy guile.’”<sup>102</sup> Once Anselm was appointed archbishop, Vaughn claims, he

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 134, 12.

even went so far as to remove letters from the collections of his correspondence to present himself in a more favorable light, suppressing evidence as part of a propaganda campaign against Henry I during the conflict over investiture.<sup>103</sup>

It is in Vaughn's idea of "topoi" in Anselm's life that she has found a stronger foundation for her deconstructionist interpretations of the saint than anything Barlow imagined. Anselm supposedly used these "topoi," which were themes or models of correct behavior in particular situations, to consciously cultivate a particular public image. There was the "the age-old topos of unworthiness and reluctance," well-known in medieval Christianity, "the topos of obedience to the commands of superiors," and other roles deliberately acted out by Anselm.<sup>104</sup> Vaughn's argument opens the gates to viewing everything Anselm said and wrote in another light, for taking his words at face value could only obscure the hidden meaning within the margins of the text.

One year after her full-length study, a confrontation between Vaughn and Southern made its way into the pages of *Albion*. Invited to respond to the arguments in *Anselm of Bec and Robert of Meulan*, Richard Southern defended his position:

Behind her interpretation of the words [of Anselm], there seems to lie a more general reluctance to believe that anyone could positively want *not* to be an archbishop, could prefer to remain in comparative obscurity. Yet everything in Anselm's thought and practice proclaims the reality of his aversion. . . . He was being forced to turn from the contemplation of God and from teaching others . . . in order to immerse himself in a life of frustrating activity. For Anselm, this was not promotion; it was his nearest approach to hell.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 266-7, 292-4. For the debate on the editing of Anselm's correspondence, see Southern, "Sally Vaughn's Anselm," 191-202; Vaughn, "Anselm: Saint and Statesman," 211-16.

<sup>104</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 131, 129.

<sup>105</sup> Southern, "Sally Vaughn's Anselm," 186-7.

There is, Southern admits, a connection between the monastic community and the broader secular world, but Vaughn's topoi and her view of Anselm as "a man of the world in monk's clothing" cover up the profound differences within that world.<sup>106</sup> Portraying Anselm in the same terms as the kings whom he opposed is to misunderstand Anselm's view of the world, and Southern concludes that "it is too high a price of to pay for bringing unity into the scene."<sup>107</sup>

"What seems remarkable to me," Vaughn comments, "and apparently to Sir Richard as well, is that he and I can derive such different conclusions from virtually the same evidence."<sup>108</sup> This difference no longer seem so remarkable, however, once it is placed within the context of two schools of thought, neo-romanticism and deconstructionism, with mutually unintelligible categories. When Southern contrasts the differences between a saint and a scheming politician, he speaks "of good and evil, of world-oriented and God-oriented outlooks, of justice strictly conceived and justice as a cloak for self-interest, of words spoken as truth and words used as instruments of policy or image-building,"<sup>109</sup> whereas to Vaughn, the differences between a politician and a saint, and the standards by which one judges their motives, are not "eternal truths, but differ from age to age."<sup>110</sup> Vaughn criticizes Southern for drawing too sharp a divide

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>108</sup> Vaughn, "Anselm: Saint and Statesman," *Albion* 20, no. 2 (1988): 205.

<sup>109</sup> Southern, 203.

<sup>110</sup> Vaughn, "Anselm: Saint and Statesman," 206. This brings to mind Adam Smith's words, "that insidious and crafty animal, vulgarly called a statesman or politician"; *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1998), 527. Even Aristotle spoke of politicians who "in office behave arrogantly and aggrandize themselves"; *The Politics*, trans.

between the material and the spiritual in monastic life.<sup>111</sup> She defends the idea of *topoi*, even as she admits that “the most difficult part of my analysis of Anselm’s political career is accounting for the apparent dichotomy between Anselm’s words and his deeds as I have reconstructed them.”<sup>112</sup>

Although both historians staunchly defended their positions in this celebrated debate, the overall result was a qualifying of the deconstructionist interpretation, as Vaughn subtly revised what she had written in *Anselm of Bec*. She claimed that “I have neither said nor believed that Anselm ‘desired’ the archbishopric of Canterbury. But that he ‘sought’ it, once he was convinced that God intended him for it, there can be no doubt.”<sup>113</sup> Elsewhere she states that Anselm’s “argument that nothing could make him take pleasure in worldly affairs, while literally true, was consciously misleading.”<sup>114</sup> Vaughn walks a very fine line here, and Southern doubts whether her arguments can support such a distinction: “She concedes that his reluctance to be archbishop was heartfelt; but she cannot abandon the view that, at another level, he desired and planned to be that very thing.”<sup>115</sup> Believing that oaths could be broken to fulfill the divine plan, carefully calculating his political behavior with “a degree of pious deceptiveness,” and determined that “historical details might be suppressed or rearranged for the sake of

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Carnes Lord (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 150 (1302b6-7). Perhaps there is not, after all, so much difference from age to age.

<sup>111</sup> Vaughn, 218.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 209-210.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>114</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 130.

<sup>115</sup> Southern, “Sally Vaughn’s Anselm,” 184.

creating an edifying public image,” Vaughn’s Anselm comes across as an unscrupulous modern politician, despite her concern to avoid this anachronism when “neither the word nor the concept” existed at the time.<sup>116</sup> Her distinction between “desired” and “sought,” which captures the ambivalence of Vaughn’s argument as a whole, has not been clarified.

The greatest weakness of Vaughn’s approach is her unwillingness to ever accept Anselm’s words as sincere. Much of this is perhaps due to the ideological nature of deconstructionism and its quasi-religious conviction that there is always another story beneath the surface, where a hidden web of power relationships tinge every human thought and action with a baser hue than they appear to possess. The more hidden this power nexus, of course, the more the skill of the deconstructionist merits praise. With a level of suspicion bordering on the paranoid, it is possible for Vaughn to construct a seemingly plausible picture of Anselm as the scheming, power-hungry politician. She is unsuccessful, however, in demonstrating that, minus the suspicion which construes all things in a double fashion, the evidence would reasonably support such a conclusion. This is, indeed, the Achilles’ heel of deconstructionism as a whole: take away the ideological conviction, and the case falls apart.

Vaughn’s inattention to Anselm’s theology and religious beliefs constitutes the second major weakness of her writings. Cantor ignores this area entirely, but he can be excused more easily since he firmly demarcated 1089 as his point of departure; not so for Vaughn, who devotes a great deal of space to Anselm’s thirty years in a monastery.<sup>117</sup> This flaw is closely related to the first, for it becomes easier to deconstruct Anselm once his religious faith has been relegated to a secondary role. Thus, when Anselm is

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<sup>116</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 167; “Anselm: Saint and Statesman,” 206.

<sup>117</sup> See, for instance, Vaughn, *The Abbey of Bec*, 23-41; *idem*, *Anselm*, 19-77.

obedient, it is not real, sincere obedience, but “the topos of obedience.”<sup>118</sup> When he spurns worldly things, it is to invoke “the topos of the ideal monk.”<sup>119</sup> When he is reluctant, it is merely “the age-old topos of unworthiness and reluctance.”<sup>120</sup> The famed reluctance of men such as St. Ambrose or Pope Gregory the Great to assume high office is, for Vaughn, proof enough that such a *topos* existed; the possibility that perhaps Ambrose, Gregory, and Anselm were truly reluctant never occurs to her.<sup>121</sup> The examples of humble reluctance found in saints’ lives, while it might lead many to seek a common cause for this humility in similar relationships to the Christian faith, leads Vaughn to suspect ever greater hypocrisy. For her, it was never a possibility that Anselm may have very well have been something very close to the ideal monk, or that this theologian may very well have wished to withdraw from the world and pursue a life of contemplation, as he had done for three decades. Vaughn may have fallen victim to the scholarly *topos* of delighting at discovering hypocrisy where none, in fact, exists.

Once the category of *topos* is established, no act of piety, no altruistic intention need be taken as such, for even if it is sincere on some level, its true purpose is to manipulate; thus, Vaughn concludes that Anselm’s stated distaste for worldly things, “while literally true, was consciously misleading,”<sup>122</sup> and that he did not “desire” the archbishopric but actively “sought” it.<sup>123</sup> Anselm’s protestations over being violently

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<sup>118</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 131.

<sup>119</sup> Vaughn, “Eadmer’s *Historia Novarum*: A Reinterpretation,” in *ANS*, 275.

<sup>120</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 129.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 117; *idem*, “Eadmer’s *Historia Novorum*,” 271.

<sup>122</sup> Vaughn, “Eadmer’s *Historia Novorum*,” 130.

<sup>123</sup> Vaughn, “Anselm: Saint and Statesman,” 209.

invested with the see of Canterbury provide an opportunity for Vaughn to combine her trademark cynicism with an odd attempt at psychoanalysis:

By a striking reenactment of the age-old topos of unworthiness and reluctance, Anselm had made it as clear as humanly possible that he disdained the wealth and authority of the archbishopric. It was of crucial importance to him that he should demonstrate this point, for Canterbury was by far the richest and most powerful prelate in the Anglo-Norman world. It was the tastiest of all plums for ecclesiastical careerists. . . . Anselm, ever conscious of the importance of appearances, displayed with dramatic force the point that he did not seek the office out of covetousness but was swept into it by the irresistible tide of God's will. The role came easily to him, for he had only to reach inside himself and rediscover the young, "untamed" Anselm who had not yet surrendered himself to God, and who now, at sixty, really did dread the responsibility of the archiepiscopacy. . . . But in resisting, Anselm was obliged to conceal his most fundamental moral commitment: the surrender of self to God.<sup>124</sup>

The schizophrenia of Barlow's Anselm is clearly present in Vaughn; no longer a mere suspicion, it is virtually a clinical diagnosis. This conviction, what Alexander Hamilton once dubbed "the supposition of universal venality in human nature," has profound implications for how one approaches Anselm's ideas.<sup>125</sup> If Anselm's theology is saturated with the conviction that "true obedience is that which occurs when a rational being, not under compulsion but voluntarily, keeps to a desire which has been received

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<sup>124</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 130. In an instructive example of how Vaughn misinterprets the evidence, note that she follows this passage with Anselm's words: "'Not until you had given me your permission to be advanced to the archbishopric,' Anselm later told the Bec monks, 'did I disclose to anyone this surrender of self; rather, I used self as an insuperable obstacle to my being promoted.'" This would lead the reader to believe that Anselm had arrived at the conclusion that God intended him to be archbishop, but he withheld this information in order to act out the topos of reluctance. Anselm's actual words to the monks of Bec were *Numquam, antequam concederetis me ad archiepiscopatum promoveri, hanc meam vobis factam deditionem alicui exposui, sed obiebam eam quasi firmissimum obstaculum ne promoverer* (in Walter Fröhlich's translation: "Before you consented to my being promoted to the archbishopric I never talked to anybody about my dedication to you but I brought it up as a most powerful obstacle against my promotion"; Ep. 156. The "dedication" refers to the monks of Bec, rather than his "surrender of self" to God. Instead of, as Vaughn argues, Anselm knowing God intends for him to be the archbishop but pretending that God demands he reject it, what he is in fact describing is how he mentioned his obedience to the monks of Bec as yet another argument against his appointment. By a slight tweaking of the words, Vaughn managed to make Anselm suggest the opposite of the meaning his words conveyed.

<sup>125</sup> Hamilton, John C., ed. *The Federalist: A Commentary on the Constitution of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1998), 566 (Federalist 76).

from God,”<sup>126</sup> to Vaughn, this must clearly be an example of the wily monk preserving his image for posterity. When Anselm declares that “nobody will reach the heavenly kingdom except through obedience,”<sup>127</sup> he is probably “concerned that he appear as fulfilling the proper *topoi*.”<sup>128</sup> It is a strange Heaven that is peopled with such deceivers, and a strange God who is thus deceived.

Obedience was inseparable from Anselm’s Benedictine vocation, his concepts of free will and sin, and his approach to the Atonement, but Vaughn only notices it when it crosses her political radar: “The importance of obedience to Anselm becomes clear in his insistence on submission and obedience from all British prelates.”<sup>129</sup> Despite the central place of *rectus ordo*, or right order, in Anselm’s theology, based on biblical and Augustinian ideas, Vaughn conceives of it in a purely ecclesio-political sense, claiming he derived the idea from “the precedents set by Lanfranc, Bede, and a contemporary continental movement toward primacies supported by the papacy.”<sup>130</sup> After referring the reader to Gerd Tellenbach’s discussion of right order,<sup>131</sup> which itself gives due attention to the religious nature of *rectus ordo*, Vaughn continues with a notion of *rectus ordo* that refers solely to power relationships: “Such was Anselm’s idea of ‘right order’: authority over the entire British episcopacy; a kind of stewardship with the king under God; and a

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<sup>126</sup> Anselm, CDH I.10; Schmitt 2:65; p. 280.

<sup>127</sup> Ep. 231.

<sup>128</sup> Vaughn, “*Eadmer’s Historia Novorum*,” 278.

<sup>129</sup> Vaughn, “Politician,” 285.

<sup>130</sup> Vaughn, “St. Anselm,” 66.

<sup>131</sup> Tellenbach, 126-61.



semi-autonomous relationship with the pope.”<sup>132</sup> This misunderstanding is the result of ignoring the religious views which defined Anselm’s life.

Anselm himself offered quite a different view of obedience than what one finds in Vaughn, and his sermon is perhaps the best rejoinder to her allegations that this *topos* can be satisfied by merely going through the motions:

“And what,” said the other [monk], “must be thought of one who voluntarily offers himself for the management of manors, and who, in order to bring to effect what he desires, secretly enlists helpers, promises gifts, and pledges his labours?”

To this he [Anselm] replied: “The monastic profession has no place for such as this.”

“Why not?” he said. “For though he may have the desires I have described, nevertheless he attempts to do nothing without the permission of his superior.”

Anselm replied: “Permission is something which deceives many. Obedience and disobedience are contraries: permission lies between these extremes. He who is not obliged by obedience to leave the walls of the monastery, but wished nevertheless to do so, and would gladly have freedom from the strictness of the rule—such a man sins in having an unbridled will, even if he is unwilling to presume to act without permission, and thereby is able to defend his actions by the permission on which he relies. For no-one, after he has become dead to the world and has entered the cloister, ought on any account, even in intention, to return to worldly affairs. Since however he was unwilling to follow his own will without permission, the deed alone will be excused by the obedience which in this respect he has observed; but the will itself, since it was contrary to his obedience, will be perilous to him unless he repents. It is because this is not always recognized, that permission often deceives those who seek it as a way of carrying out their own wishes.”<sup>133</sup>

### *A Middle Way?*

The contrasting views of Vaughn and Southern are so thorough, so worked out in all their particulars, that all scholarship on Anselm in the past two decades has tended to

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<sup>132</sup> Vaughn, “St. Anselm,” 67.

<sup>133</sup> VA 76-7 (I have divided the dialogue into paragraphs for clarity); see also “De oboedientia, licentia et inoboedientia,” in *Memorials of St. Anselm*, ed. R. W. Southern and F. S. Schmitt, O.S.B. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 76.

base itself, more or less, on one of these two approaches. There has been, however, one self-conscious attempt to find a middle way, and even though it was ultimately unsuccessful, it illuminates some of the problems presented by Eadmer's work. In a master's thesis written two years after the confrontation in *Albion*, Stuart MacDonald attempts not only to move beyond the Southern-Vaughn dichotomy, but to restore some semblance of unity to Anselm studies as a whole. In that, MacDonald argues, lies the only hope for an accurate appraisal of Anselm:

The mutual incomprehension of Vaughn and Southern and the general failure of scholarship to grasp the functional context of Anselm's writings are, in fact, one and the same problem, namely, an inability to see the whole Anselm. Our restrictive views of what 'philosophy' is or what 'politics' are, are the cause for this dilemma.<sup>134</sup>

Re-examining the writings of Eadmer, MacDonald concludes that the positions of monk and archbishop were, indeed, compatible and that "a devout contemplative monk could also be an astute politician while still maintaining an other-worldly detachment."<sup>135</sup> Both Southern and Vaughn, MacDonald argues, have illuminated some aspect of Anselm's thought and action, but each has lost sight of what Eadmer had originally suggested:

Neither Southern's inward-looking, other-worldly Anselm; nor Vaughn's implicitly conniving and hypocritical Anselm accords with the Anselm of the writings, a man both deeply attuned to the needs of Christendom in his age, and profoundly dedicated to a high ideal of right order.<sup>136</sup>

It is essential to realise that in the eleventh century to be an abbot and to be an archbishop were both political-religious careers. Perhaps the term administrative-religious careers would remove the negative connotations of 'political' that cause Vaughn and Southern so much trouble, but at the expense of conveying the real

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>135</sup> Stuart MacDonald, *Aosta, Bec and Canterbury: Reconsidering the Vocations of St. Anselm (1033-1109) as Scholar, Monk and Bishop* (Master's Thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1990), abstract.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 115.

leadership and policy-directive side of Anselm's role. . . . Eadmer's characterization of Anselm as a prophet with a political mission is clearer. Prophets came to direct nations and kings in the will of God. So too, did Anselm.<sup>137</sup>

Understanding Anselm, then, would be even more difficult than it would at first appear, for it would require a re-appraisal of not just one man, but of an entire era. If MacDonald is right, historians are parsing out what can only be understood as an organic whole, and it is the study of Anselm which, perhaps, points out this shortcoming most glaringly:

Progress in Anselmian scholarship that would take into account this total picture of Anselm is impeded by a kind of unconscious anachronism. Today we are too accustomed to see the categories of secular and ecclesiastical as inherently exclusive; the two spheres should never meet. Such distinctions were not present in Anselm's day. The distinctions between monastery and world were clear for Anselm, but they were not confrontational. . . . It would be helpful if modern scholars brought Anselm back down to earth and everyday affairs.<sup>138</sup>

While it is true that the secular and the ecclesiastical were not as finely demarcated in the 11<sup>th</sup> century as they are in much of the world today, for Anselm there was a clear distinction between the monastery and the outside world. In one of his earliest letters, written while he was still a prior, Anselm warned another monk to despise the world and all it had to offer:

I call true what the Holy Spirit says through the mouth of God's friend—that *the friend . . . of this world makes himself God's enemy*. And it is really so. . . . These are not merely words to be heard but a terrible reality to be feared. If therefore you do not wish to become God's enemy, fear with horror being a friend of the world.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 120-1.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 118-19.

<sup>139</sup> Ep. 8; italicized words from James 4:4.

Anselm repeated this theme in several letters, citing scriptural passages to show the gulf between the life lived in the world and the life consecrated to God.<sup>140</sup> Anselm contrasted not only the profound differences between the secular and the monastic, but also between the monastic and ecclesiastical paths. In a letter to the Bishop of Paris in 1093, he criticized the bishop for forcibly removing a cleric from the monastery he had entered:

[St. Gregory said] that whoever has sought the monastery gate should never again be involved in the disquiet of ecclesiastical cares. . . . If anyone separates the precious from the worthless, that is to say a soul from the world, he will be like the mouth of God, as it is written: what will he be whose mouth and hands drag back to the world a soul clinging to God? God forbid, my lord! . . . It is indeed terrible thing to hear that a bishop is chaining to the world what Christ is unchaining from the world. What Christ is drawing into the port out of the storms and tempests of the world, this the bishop draws back out of the port to be shipwrecked in the turbulent storms of the world. *What Christ hides in his sheepfold from a pack of wolves trying to kill, the bishop tears away from the fold and exposes to the pack of wolves.*<sup>141</sup>

Anselm experienced this confrontation between the monastery and the outside world when he became archbishop. At the beginning of his exile under William Rufus, Anselm fervently asked to be relieved of his office by Pope Urban II; “absolve my soul from the chain of such slavery,” he wrote, recalling how he had protested his elevation to the archiepiscopate, wanting to “completely flee from all worldly activities.”<sup>142</sup> These

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<sup>140</sup> Epp. 44, 121, 134. In Ep. 44, for instance, Anselm tried to exhort a friend to become a monk and reject the world: “I am not reluctant to disclose my advice, indeed not mine but God’s, more clearly. If, therefore, you have already realized: *that everything that is in the world is the desire of the flesh, desire of the eyes and vanity of life, and they come not from the Father but from the world*; if you already know that *the world and its desire will pass*; if you read that *anyone who leaves his home or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife and children or lands for my Name’s sake will receive a hundredfold and will obtain everlasting life*; then I exhort you: *love not the world or the things of the world*, but give everything up and follow Christ’s poverty, that you may receive a hundredfold in exchange and may obtain everlasting life”; italicized words from 1 John 2:16, 1 John 2:17, James 4:4, Matt. 19:29, 1 John 2:15.

<sup>141</sup> Ep. 161, italics mine.

<sup>142</sup> Ep. 206.

were not the rash words of a man exiled from his adopted country. "I have now been in this archbishopric for four years," he recalled, "and have borne no fruit, but have lived uselessly with immense and detestable difficulties for my soul so that every day I wish rather to die outside England than to live there."<sup>143</sup> Nor were these the reflections of an exhausted man more nostalgic for the monastery than truly rejecting of the secular world. In 1093, before he was even consecrated as archbishop, Anselm declared that only obedience compelled him to leave his monastic life:

Let everybody know as my conscience tells me before God—and I know that to invoke God as a witness to a lie is a crime—that not the greed for anything which a servant of God, *a despiser of the world*, should spurn draws or binds me to the archbishopric of the English; but the fear of God compels me *to endure being dragged, suffering and afraid, from the church of God*. And if I were permitted, while preserving the obedience and charity I owe to God and his Church, my mother, for his sake, I would freely choose to be and obey and serve under an abbot and the discipline of the Rule in monastic poverty and humility rather than to reign in a worldly manner in this world or to rule over or to possess and archbishopric, a bishopric or an abbey. . . .<sup>144</sup>

Whether or not Anselm felt that the secular and the ecclesiastical should never meet, then, he clearly felt that they should not meet in him, and he repeatedly sought to free himself from this burden. He raised objections even after being chosen archbishop, but obedience—the same notion that dominates his theology—compelled him to follow the commands of his superior, the Archbishop of Rouen, and accept the archiepiscopate.<sup>145</sup> If the office of abbot was, as MacDonald states, an "administrative-religious" career, it is worthwhile to note that Anselm had been just as opposed to being

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ep. 160, italics mine.

<sup>145</sup> Epp. 149, 154, 176; HN 41.

chosen as abbot in 1078, it requiring the intervention of an archbishop to force him to accept.<sup>146</sup>

Despite MacDonald's impressive analysis of the spiritual piety underlying 11<sup>th</sup>-century reform efforts, he does not give adequate attention to Anselm's theology, and it is here where one finds clues as to why Anselm, in his own words, would prefer "to be under a superior than to preside over others, to obey rather than to command, to serve rather than to rule, to minister rather than to be ministered to."<sup>147</sup> In *De conceptu virginali et de originali peccato*,<sup>148</sup> as well in *De concordia praescientiae et praedestinationis et gratiae dei cum libero arbitrio*,<sup>149</sup> Anselm continues a line of thought first articulated in *Cur Deus Homo*, that humanity's inability to sin or to uphold justice does not excuse it, since this very inability is itself the consequence of freely chosen sin.<sup>150</sup> This original sin, transmitted to all of Adam's descendants, is the proper context in which to place Anselm's consuming fear that, through him, posterity might find a weakened church in England. The incapacity of the English church to uphold justice and

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<sup>146</sup> Ep. 88; VA 44-5.

<sup>147</sup> Ep. 160.

<sup>148</sup> "On the Virgin Conception and Original Sin," 22-29; Schmitt 2:161-73; pp. 378-89.

<sup>149</sup> "The Compatibility of God's Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Grace with Human Freedom," III.7; Schmitt 2:273-4; pp. 461-3.

<sup>150</sup> CDH I.24; Schmitt 2:92; pp. 309-10. The question is, "But if he [man] does not have the capacity [to avoid sin], in what sense is he a wrongdoer?" Anselm's reply: "Perhaps, if the responsibility for his incapacity does not rest with him, he can be excused to some extent. But if there is blame inherent in the capacity itself, the incapacity does not mitigate the sin itself. . . . For suppose someone assigns his bondslave [servus] a task, and tells him not to leap into a pit from which he cannot by any means climb out, and that bondslave, despising the command and advice of his master, leaps into the pit which has been pointed out to him, so that he is completely unable to carry out the task assigned to him. Do you think that his incapacity serves in the slightest as a valid excuse for him not to perform the task assigned to him? . . . The very fact of his incapacity is blameworthy: because it is something he ought not to have, no indeed, he is under an obligation not to have it. . . . It is blameworthy for him to have an incapacity as a result of which he cannot uphold righteousness and guard against sin. . . ." See also Richard Campbell, "The Conceptual Roots of Anselm's Soteriology," AABC, 262-3.

to resist secular domination would then be all the more condemnable, because freely entered into through the weakness of Anselm's policies. As Anselm expressed in a letter to his friend Archbishop Hugh of Lyons,

I am certain that the archbishopric will be given to no one after me except in the way I hold it on the day of my death, and that, if another king should come to the throne during my lifetime, he will grant me nothing unless he finds that I already hold it. If therefore, I hold the archbishopric thus diminished until the day of my death, in this way the church will lose through me. . . . Now, since the King is the advocate of the church and I am its guardian, what will be said in future except that, because the King did it and the Archbishop by upholding it confirmed it, it should be ratified?<sup>151</sup>

This fear, flowing from Anselm's enormous sense of responsibility, helps one understand why Anselm resisted the "administrative-religious" path to the utmost of his abilities, and why, once he was appointed to the archiepiscopate, he defended Canterbury's rights and privileges with such tenacity.<sup>152</sup> MacDonald's reliance on the words of Eadmer, rather than Anselm, as well as his failure to give the proper scope to Anselm's theology, leads him to underestimate the very real difference, in Anselm's view, between the monastery and the world.

Despite MacDonald's meticulous work on Eadmer, he seems to have overlooked the possibility that the *Historia Novorum* and possibly even the *Vita Anselmi* constituted, at least in part, a politically motivated defense of Anselm's policies.<sup>153</sup> For instance, although lay investiture became a major dispute only after Anselm's return from his first

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<sup>151</sup> Ep. 176. See also his letter to King Baldwin of Jerusalem, wherein he expresses the same idea: "Do not think, as many bad kings do, that the Church of God has been given to you as if to a master whom it should serve, and not that it has been entrusted to you as its advocate and protector. . . . In whatever way you establish the Church in your realm in this new revival, so future generations will receive and maintain her for a long time"; Ep. 235.

<sup>152</sup> This perspective brings another dimension to Anselm's defense of Canterbury's primacy against York, in the final year of his life; see HN 198-211; Epp. 442-5, 451-6, 462, 464, 465, 467, 470-2.

<sup>153</sup> See, for instance, Vaughn, "Eadmer's *Historia Novorum*."

exile in 1100,<sup>154</sup> Eadmer backdated the principles behind this conflict to the beginning of Anselm's archiepiscopate, ignoring the fact that Anselm did not then object to the practice of royal investiture.<sup>155</sup> Both Southern and Vaughn, despite their opposition on so many points, recognize what MacDonald does not. As Southern points out,

Eadmer was not the first—and certainly not the last—historian to discover the value of a theme which gave coherence and dignity to his story, and made it intelligible to his readers, at the small expense of a little distortion. He did not need to distort it much: it was simply a matter of importing into past events principles which had not been in the minds of the actors.<sup>156</sup>

This does not mean that Eadmer should not be trusted, for his abilities as a historian far outweigh his shortcomings;<sup>157</sup> it certainly means, however, that on critical points one should at least be aware of his bias. "The next step in Anselmian scholarship," MacDonald argues, "must be a re-integration of Anselm's various parts in this [political-religious] context."<sup>158</sup> To succeed in this task of re-integration, however, he must address the question of Eadmer's reliability. MacDonald may feel that "a devout contemplative monk could also be an astute politician while still maintaining an other-worldly detachment",<sup>159</sup> but demonstrating this requires more than a few passages from Eadmer. It is doubtful, moreover, whether Eadmer's words support MacDonald's interpretation,

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<sup>154</sup> See Epp. 213, 214; HN 120; VA 127.

<sup>155</sup> See the following chapter for a more thorough discussion of Anselm's views at this time, as well as Eadmer's reliability.

<sup>156</sup> Southern, *Portrait*, 415; see also Vaughn, "Eadmer's *Historia Novorum*."

<sup>157</sup> Michael Staunton remarks that "the modern appeal of Eadmer's work lies in the author's attention to accuracy and detail as revealed by his research methods and presentation." "Eadmer's *Vita Anselmi*: a reinterpretation," *Journal of Medieval History* 23, no. 1 (1997), 13. See Chapter Four for a discussion of Eadmer's reliability regarding the Council of Rockingham.

<sup>158</sup> MacDonald, 120.

<sup>159</sup> MacDonald, abstract.



for while Eadmer did suggest that Anselm's mental acuity was great indeed, this is a long way from making him "an astute politician."<sup>160</sup> MacDonald's attempt to neatly reconcile the careers of abbot and archbishop could apply to other figures, but not to Anselm—at least according to his own thoughts on the matter—and it overlooks what has not been fully reconciled, namely, Anselm's thought and his actions.

### *Recent Views*

In 1990, Southern released a re-worked and expanded version of his original biography, titling the new edition *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*. Without mentioning either directly, Southern addresses both Vaughn's idea of Anselm as a pious but somehow unscrupulous ecclesiastical statesman and Cantor's Anselm, the ardent Gregorian reformer: "It would create a false impression to see a unity of policy where there is only the unity of holiness manifesting itself in several different areas. . . . His theme was not capable of administrative organization."<sup>161</sup> Far from retreating, Southern sharpened the lines in his portrait. While Anselm was active as an archbishop, "it was only in the area of broad ecclesiastical policy—the area in which historians expect to be able to allot him a place—that he did almost nothing."<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> These is the main passage of Eadmer upon which MacDonald relies: "When he [Anselm] was in a crowd of litigants and his opponents were laying their heads together, discussing the crafts and wiles by which they could help their own case and fraudulently injure his, he would have nothing to do with such things; instead, he would discourse to those who would listen about the Gospel or some other parts of the Bible, or at least about some subject tending to edification. And often, if there was no-one to listen to such talk, he would compose himself, in the sweet quietness of a pure heart, to sleep. Then sometimes, when the frauds which had been prepared with intricate subtlety were brought to his notice, he would immediately detect and disentangle them, not like a man who had just been sleeping, but like one who had been wide-awake, keeping a sharp watch. For the charity which envieth not, which doeth no evil, which seeketh not her own, was alive in him, and showed him things at a glance as they appeared in the light of truth"; VA 46.

<sup>161</sup> Southern, *Portrait*, 232.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

While Southern is willing to concede that during his first exile, Anselm's views changed substantially under the influence of the Gregorian archbishop, Hugh of Lyons, he still contends that it was Anselm's deeply felt sense of obedience, not a wholesale conversion to the Gregorian cause, which compelled him to introduce the decrees against investiture and homage upon his return to England:

We shall not understand Anselm's last years unless his fundamentally unpolitical attitude to his duties is borne in mind. Hitherto, he himself had been involved without protest in both the "intolerable" evils condemned by the pope in his presence in 1099. . . . But after hearing their condemnation in 1099, he conformed rigidly to both parts of the condemnation, and nowhere expressed an opinion about their substance. . . . He treated both prohibitions as absolute commands, leaving no room for discussion or negotiation: he embarrassed his friends, and even the pope, by the stiffness of his obedience.<sup>163</sup>

Although Southern gives due attention to the role of obedience in Anselm's theology and his attitude toward the commands of superiors, he fails to see the ways in which that religiously-based obedience had come into conflict with Anselm's allegiance to the king, long before the archbishop's first exile. From the beginning, Anselm fought with the Rufus over, among other things, the return of lands of to the church, the need to appoint abbots to abbacies Rufus deliberately kept vacant, and Anselm's desire to hold an ecclesiastical council in England.<sup>164</sup> The king's repeated refusal to permit Anselm to seek the pope's advice led to Anselm's exile.<sup>165</sup> "I knew that if I tolerated these things to the end I would establish such evil usages for my successors to the damnation of my soul," Anselm later recalled.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 283-4.

<sup>164</sup> Epp. 176, 206, 210; HN 39-41, 43-5, 48-50; VA 69.

<sup>165</sup> Epp. 206, 210; HN 84-7; VA 91-3.

<sup>166</sup> Ep. 206.

These conflicts were very real, and all of them concerned ecclesiastical policy. Anselm-as-Gregorian and Anselm-as-scheming politician do not exhaust the possibilities for Anselm's policies. Although Anselm did not have a comprehensive, ready-made program when he became archbishop, he did have a fervent love for the Church, a theological worldview underscoring his duty to God, and the monastic discipline which enabled him to stay the course. In Anselm, these were strong enough to serve as a wellspring of ecclesiastical policy and to guide his determined resistance to two kings of England, and the failure to recognize this constitutes Southern's greatest shortcoming. The events of the Council of Rockingham suggest that Anselm did not simply flounder around when faced with an entirely new challenge; rather, he fell back on the same habits of mind that had marked his theological investigations for over thirty years.

Southern's insight into the role of obedience in Anselm's life nevertheless surpasses that of any historian, and it has shaped the opinions of many scholars. Uta-Renate Blumenthal, in her masterful work on the Investiture Contest, aligns very closely with Southern in her approach to Anselm, albeit with a few exceptions.<sup>167</sup> Anselm "deeply distrusted the world with its blandishments and generally lacked any interest in secular affairs or advancement," she remarks.<sup>168</sup> To Blumenthal, the seeds of the struggle in England lay not in any policy conflict but rather in Anselm's strict obedience to his religious calling; having spent over three decades in a monastery, he "never doubted that after God he owed obedience first of all to the pope as successor of Saint Peter."<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> The most notable exception is the controversy with York over Canterbury's primacy.

<sup>168</sup> Blumenthal, 154.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

Between Anselm's adherence to papally-ordered reform measures and his own conscientious opposition to simony and clerical marriage, it was inevitable that he would come into conflict not only with the Anglo-Norman kings, but also with a large number of his fellow bishops. Where Vaughn sees great ambition and ulterior motives, and Cantor, Gregorian ideology, Blumenthal returns to Anselm's monastic obedience. Anselm was an aberration, an anomaly in an otherwise compliant English episcopate, but he was a glorious and tragic anomaly. To search for policies, Gregorian or otherwise, would only be an exercise in projecting what some would like to see.

C. Warren Hollister, on the other hand, denies that Anselm was ill at ease in secular dealings, citing the great success of Bec, which expanded under Anselm's abbacy. Far from distrusting or even despising secular matters, Anselm "acceded to his archbishopric with an abundance of powerful friends and an astute understanding of the kaleidoscopic world of Anglo-Norman politics."<sup>170</sup> For Anselm, the Gregorian attempt to eradicate lay investiture was not an issue; he was more interested in monastic reform. Far from sharing the Gregorian desire for canonical election, Hollister claims, Anselm probably recognized that free and canonical election of abbots would not guarantee the election of men committed to the reformist cause.<sup>171</sup> Hollister builds on the idea, articulated by his former student Sally Vaughn,<sup>172</sup> that Anselm's ideal was one of king and primate working together, an ideal which Walter Fröhlich traces back to Anselm's

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<sup>170</sup> C. Warren Hollister. "St. Anselm on Lay Investiture," ANS, 147.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 152-6.

<sup>172</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 150-1.

friendship with William the Conqueror.<sup>173</sup> Since Anselm, even at the end of the Investiture Contest, consecrated bishops and abbots that Henry had appointed, Hollister concludes that Anselm never embraced Gregorian ideas. Anselm “was prepared to consecrate the several administrator-bishops whom Henry I had nominated . . . and Henry was prepared, in turn, to nominate Anselmian reformers to the great abbacies.” This was not a compromise; it was “a procedure that Anselm had himself been striving for ever since the commencement of his archiepiscopate.”<sup>174</sup>

Southern's *A Portrait in a Landscape* indirectly addresses the claims of Hollister, Fröhlich, and Vaughn regarding Anselm's attitude toward lay investiture. According to Southern, Anselm had indeed initially attempted to model his archiepiscopate on the close relationship between his predecessor Lanfranc and William I, but this attempt had not survived Rufus' oppression of the English church and the Gregorian decrees Anselm encountered during his first exile. Under the influence of the Gregorians, Anselm was “moving toward the rejection of those mutual accommodations between king and Church, which the Hildebrandine party in the Church had been denouncing for years.”<sup>175</sup> Once again, however, this transformation was only partial; the deciding factor was Anselm's recognition that it was his duty to enforce these decrees, and his obedience proved as resolute as any ideological conviction could have been. This change in Anselm's fundamental outlook on the relationship between the Church and secular authority was

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<sup>173</sup> Walter Fröhlich. “St Anselm's special relationship with William the Conqueror,” *ANS*, 107-109.

<sup>174</sup> Hollister, 156.

<sup>175</sup> Southern, *Portrait*, 287.

not, however, due to any political conversion to the Gregorian position but rather the result of his deeply-felt obedience:

The situation illustrates Anselm's indifference to the compromises of practical affairs. Obedience to lawful authority and to religious vows had the highest place in his whole system of theology and in his personal, as well as corporate, religion. . . . He had no such rigid views about any matters of political policy. But when the word was spoken by someone who had the authority to speak . . . he obeyed without discussion or reservation. Unlike almost everyone in the papal Curia, unlike the pope himself, he did not understand the need for compromise; he saw no grounds for withdrawal or discussion; he took pleasure in obedience.<sup>176</sup> In his recent biography of Henry I, Hollister agrees with Southern that Anselm

upheld Gregorian policies out of obedience, but concludes from this that Anselm's ideal never really changed: Anselm had "no personal convictions" about Gregorian policies and "no particular taste for the Gregorian idea of a Church free of monarchical control."<sup>177</sup> He took issue with those historians, such as Southern and Cantor, who portray Anselm as an uncompromising "holy diehard" whose intransigence prevented the speedy resolution of the English investiture struggle, for "Anselm was always ready to compromise on the issues of investiture and homage; it was the papacy that proved intransigent."<sup>178</sup>

Despite the fact that Hollister is not willing, as Vaughn is, to believe that Anselm actually sought the archiepiscopate,<sup>179</sup> his evaluation of Anselm certainly complements the view one finds in Vaughn. If the English Investiture Contest was actually a struggle between Henry and Pope Paschal II, with Anselm "caught in the middle" without any personal opinion on the matter, then the historian is free to concentrate on the more

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>177</sup> Hollister, *Henry I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 122.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>179</sup> Hollister, "St. Anselm on Lay Investiture," 145; Vaughn, "Anselm: Saint and Statesman," 209.

material aspects of Anselm's archiepiscopate.<sup>180</sup> Vaughn's portrait of Anselm seeking the archiepiscopate and then zealously defending the privileges and primacy of his see would only be rudely interrupted by Gregorian principles.<sup>181</sup> On the other hand, this leaves other problems raised by Anselm's obedience unresolved. If obedience, both to God and to the pope as the Vicar of St. Peter, was as fundamentally important to Anselm as Hollister admits,<sup>182</sup> then one must perform some logical acrobatics to make politically savvy ambition the hallmark of Anselm's career. If the self-abnegating obedience of Benedictine monasticism dominated Anselm's perception of the world and his place in it, then one has every reason to take his oft-expressed abhorrence to political power at face value rather than posit a worldly ambition which maneuvered that obedience on an unconscious level.

Most of those who study Anselm's theology generally adhere to Southern's point of view. For instance, in "Anselm and Keeping Order in the Real World," G. R. Evans states that Anselm "was perhaps the most intelligent innocent of the mediaeval millennium, genuinely no politician, without guile. . . ."<sup>183</sup> Although she does not mention Barlow or Vaughn, her choice of words is unmistakably an attack on those who

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<sup>180</sup> Hollister, *Henry I*, 375-6.

<sup>181</sup> Southern recognized both Anselm's later commitment to Gregorian principles as well as his determined defense of Canterbury's primacy and lands, conceding that these two tendencies could conflict: "In this sense [of obeying God's representative on earth], Anselm is an extreme papalist; but, like many other extreme papalists, he draws unwelcome boundaries when he sees papal initiatives overstepping boundaries of God's will—for instance, in overruling local rights, which have a heavenly sanction as gifts to the saints. This double obedience needs to be remembered throughout these years, for a double obedience is never free from the possibility of conflict." *Portrait*, 284.

<sup>182</sup> Hollister, 123 and note 63.

<sup>183</sup> G. R. Evans, "Anselm and Keeping Order in the Real World," *Saint Anselm—His Origins and Influence*, ed. John R. Fortin, (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 3.

accuse Anselm of “play[ing] the holy innocent,”<sup>184</sup> acting in the manner of a politician,<sup>185</sup> or using “holy guile” to feign reluctance.<sup>186</sup> To believe, as Vaughn does, that Anselm’s repeated and emotional declarations that he did not want to be archbishop were “all disingenuous and that he was covering up ambition . . . would be out of keeping with everything else we know of him.”<sup>187</sup> Like Southern, Evans believes that Anselm never stopped living as a monk; “left to himself, Anselm was a Mary not a Martha.”<sup>188</sup>

Evans begins with Anselm’s concept of *rectus ordo* and proceeds to investigate the difficulties Anselm faced “after his rude awakening to the facts of political life. He knew about monastic squabbles, but not very much about the secular politics in which it is not possible to point to the same presumption that everyone is trying to live and work *ad unum*.”<sup>189</sup> It is Evans, more than anyone, who recognizes the extent to which Anselm drew upon his intellectual resources when facing the challenges of Anglo-Norman politics:

He did not leave his old world in spirit when he went to the new. His deepest intellectual instinct was to hold all things together in harmony, to bring the priorities of the old life into balance with those of the new. Anselm found himself in conflict with area after area of his new life as Archbishop, and he was a man to whom any sort of conflict was painful. Yet he learned things, he grappled intellectually with the task of synthesizing this new world with the one he used to live in.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England*, 126.

<sup>185</sup> Vaughn, “Anselm: Saint and Statesman,” 206.

<sup>186</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 12.

<sup>187</sup> Evans, 12.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.



Evans' article, which will be discussed more fully in the final chapter, constitutes the most impressive attempt to unite Anselm's theology with his policies as archbishop; notably, it comes from someone writing about medieval theology, rather than history per se.<sup>191</sup> One might suppose, at first, that those in the fields of philosophy and theology are perhaps more inclined to view Anselm as sincere, straightforward, and earnestly obedient, sans the *topoi* in Vaughn, the split personality in Barlow, or even the ever-compromising shiftiness in Hollister. It would be certainly be more difficult to evaluate the ontological argument for the existence of God or *Cur Deus Homo* if the author is held to be insincere. There is much more at work here, however, than this argument would suggest.

Relegating Anselm's purported scheming craftiness to his role as abbot and archbishop, leaving his theology untouched, would clearly be unsatisfactory, for the Gregorian Reform certainly admitted of no sharp division between theology and ecclesiastical policy, and neither did Anselm. The same letters he wrote to secular rulers, garnering support for his struggle with Rufus and Henry, explain the duties of rulers in language that recalls both the Benedictine Rule as well as Anselm's own *Cur Deus Homo*.<sup>192</sup> Anselm's highly developed concept of obedience, which few deny stood at the very center of his actions as archbishop, can only be fully understood within the context of his monastic vocation, religious convictions, and theology. One cannot, therefore, reserve one Anselm for the world of ideas and one for history. If, on the other hand, such

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<sup>191</sup> See also Evans, *Anselm and a New Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), *Anselm* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1989), and *Philosophy and Theology in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>192</sup> See his letters to Count Robert II of Flanders (Ep. 180) and King Baldwin of Jerusalem (Ep. 235); *The Rule of Saint Benedict in English*, ed. Timothy Fry, O.S.B. (Collegeville, MN: 1982), 2.30; CDH I.12; Schmitt 2:70; p. 285.

a work as *Cur Deus Homo* was an apologetic tool for Anselm's supposed goal of aggrandizing power, a suggestion no one has offered but which would seem to flow from Vaughn's insinuations, it would be supremely difficult to explain how this theology grows organically out of every work of his going back to *De Grammatico* (On Grammar), when he was a simple prior.

Southern and Evans recognize that Anselm's actions as archbishop need to be set within the context of the previous sixty years of his life. Anselm was absorbed in theological inquiry decades before he became archbishop, and he never gave it up; his dying wish was that he might have enough time to write about the origin of the soul.<sup>193</sup> "Anselm's life and actions from 1093 to 1109," Southern writes regarding Anselm's archiepiscopate, "need to be understood as an extension of his life and experience as a monk and contemplative theologian during the previous thirty years.

In these years he had developed a system of thought and action of great intellectual beauty and completeness. . . . His mildness of manner often concealed from contemporaries the extreme rigor of his concepts of Truth, Righteousness, Justice, Freedom and Salvation, and his utter horror of sin even in those forms which others could accept as peccadillos inseparable from the pursuits of daily life. These principles set him apart from other men, and their intensity was known only to those few who, like Eadmer, lived in daily contact with him. They are expressed most fully in his letters to monks and nuns, in his Prayers and Meditations, and in his *Cur Deus Homo*.<sup>194</sup>

To explore one instance of how Anselm's theology and monastic obedience influenced his actions as archbishop is the purpose of this study. Whereas Southern argues that Anselm's experiences abroad during his first exile, from 1097 to 1100, caused a profound change in how he viewed the relationship of secular and spiritual authority, this change occurred earlier. One year into his archiepiscopate, at the Council of

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<sup>193</sup> VA 142.

<sup>194</sup> Southern, "Sally Vaughn's Anselm," 203.

Rockingham in 1095, Anselm already faced a conflicting obedience to pope and king; this event prompted Anselm to devote more thought to the conflicting claims of Caesar and Christ, and *Cur Deus Homo* bears the mark of that thought. At the same time, while the issues of Anselm's archiepiscopate enriched his theological development, *Cur Deus Homo* was also the organic result of a line of thinking one can trace back to the earliest of Anselm's writings.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

##### *Prelude to Rockingham*

By January of 1095, it had been barely a year since Anselm's consecration as archbishop of Canterbury, but he had already disputed with William Rufus on several occasions. Even before being chosen as the successor to Archbishop Lanfranc, who had died in 1089, Anselm had chastised the king for his personal behavior.<sup>195</sup> Since then, they had clashed on the return of lands to Christ Church (Canterbury monastery), church funding of Rufus' invasion of Normandy, and the need to convene an ecclesiastical council in England.<sup>196</sup> Anselm had pressed the king to appoint abbots to monasteries lacking them; these vacant abbacies were held in the king's hand, including the revenue from their lands. William refused Anselm's request, maintaining that these abbacies were his just as certain manors belonged to Anselm. According to Eadmer, Anselm objected, "They are yours to defend and guard as their patron; but not yours to assault or to lay waste. We know that they are God's to provide a living for his ministers, not to provide the means for carrying on your campaigns and wars. . . . Leave, if you please, to

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<sup>195</sup> VA 64.

<sup>196</sup> HN 39-41, 43-5, 48-9; VA 69.

the Churches what is theirs.”<sup>197</sup> Angered, the king replied that Archbishop Lanfranc would never have spoken in that manner to William’s father.

Although Norman Cantor asserts that these words of Anselm’s were revolutionary in implication, reflecting “the Gregorian doctrine of freedom of the church from secular control,”<sup>198</sup> there is little evidence to support the idea that Anselm had adopted a Gregorian outlook at this stage. One of the objections Anselm had offered to his own election as archbishop was that he would not be an effective pastor of the English church. He compared the church to a plow, pulled by two oxen, the king and the Archbishop of Canterbury; “the former rules by secular justice and sovereignty, the latter by divine doctrine and authority.”<sup>199</sup> In pressing him to become archbishop, Anselm said, the nobles and bishops of England would unwittingly “harness together at the plough under one yoke an untamed bull and an old and feeble sheep.” William Rufus was quite clearly the bull and Anselm the sheep. Whereas Lanfranc had been an ox, strong enough to look out for the interests of the church, Anselm predicted that he would be crushed by Rufus.<sup>200</sup>

Vaughn points out the critical difference between Anselm’s oxen metaphor and the Gregorian use of Pope Gelasius’ idea of separate spheres, with the priesthood nevertheless in the higher position.<sup>201</sup> The oxen metaphor was an image of “corule . . .

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<sup>197</sup> HN 50.

<sup>198</sup> Cantor, 75.

<sup>199</sup> HN 37.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> “Two there are, august emperor,” Gelasius wrote to Anastasius in 494, “by which this world is chiefly ruled, the sacred authority [*auctoritas*] of the priesthood and the royal power [*potestas*]. Of these the responsibility of the priests is more weighty in so far as they will answer for the kings of men

one of equality, thus differing from both the papal concept and the concept of unrivaled royal authority upheld by William Rufus.”<sup>202</sup> Anselm used this image to explain his own unsuitability for the highest ecclesiastical office in England. There is no implication, at this stage, that he objected to this close relationship between king and primate; on the contrary, the metaphor itself as well as the mention of Lanfranc and William I imply the effectiveness of such an arrangement. Anselm simply felt unfit to pull the plow. The fact that such a close relationship between king and archbishop, as two oxen pulling a plough, constituted Anselm’s initial hope for his archiepiscopate makes the evolution of his political thinking all the more interesting.

When Rufus returned from his unsuccessful Norman expedition, however, a momentous struggle began over Anselm’s attempt to go to Rome for his pallium, the symbol of his office, which he was to receive at the hands of the pope.<sup>203</sup> It was customary to receive the pallium within a year of consecration, a period that had already expired for Anselm.<sup>204</sup> Rufus asked Anselm which pope he intended to seek, since there was at this time a rival pope, Clement III, backed by the German emperor in his struggle with the Gregorian pope, Urban II. Urban had long been recognized as pope in France and Normandy, but England had yet to decide, not having recognized a pope since the

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themselves at the divine judgement. You know, most clement son, that, although you take precedence over all mankind in dignity, nevertheless you piously bow the neck to those who have charge of divine affairs and seek from them the means of your salvation. . . . As Your Piety is certainly well aware, no one can ever raise himself by purely human means to the privilege and place of him whom the voice of Christ has set before all [the pope], whom the church has always venerated and held in devotion as its primate. The things which are established by divine judgement can be assailed by human presumption; they cannot be overthrown by anyone’s power”; Tierney, 14-15.

<sup>202</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 151.

<sup>203</sup> Ep. 176; HN 52; VA 85.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid. According to Barlow, bestowing the pallium “recognized that the recipient was in a special relationship to the pontiff and invested with some of his powers, especially authority over suffragan bishops. But although the authority was delegated, the claim to it was perpetual”; *The English Church*, 37.

death of Gregory VII in 1085.<sup>205</sup> For Anselm, however, there could be no question of pretending the issue was undecided, for as abbot of a Norman monastery, he had already sworn obedience to Urban.<sup>206</sup> It appeared to William Rufus that Anselm was trying to appropriate a royal prerogative, and in a way, the king was correct: although it was not, at this early date, Anselm's intention to infringe upon Norman customs, a *de facto* recognition of Urban would certainly be the result of Anselm's request.<sup>207</sup> "To Rufus the question was not whether Urban was the rightful pope," Vaughn notes, "but whether the royal prerogative would remain undiminished."<sup>208</sup>

Southern argues that there could be little doubt that Rufus would eventually recognize Urban, for if he was to ever conquer Normandy or other lands in France, it would have been unthinkable to recognize Clement in England when Normandy and France had already sided with Urban.<sup>209</sup> The king's hesitation is understandable, however, for the Gregorians, led now by Urban, were shaking the traditional order to its foundations, and this ultimately threatened the Anglo-Norman ecclesiastical system. The dukes of Normandy had, over nearly two centuries, developed a tight control over the Norman church facilitated by the scope of feudal institutions in Normandy. Abbots were vassals of the duke, and their monasteries owed a quota of knights that could serve the

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<sup>205</sup> HN 53; Barlow, 338.

<sup>206</sup> HN 39-40; Epp. 125, 126, 127.

<sup>207</sup> HN 10.

<sup>208</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 177.

<sup>209</sup> Southern remarks, "It would have been a very unnecessary aggravation of his difficulties to have two different mutually excommunicated popes in lands which he intended to unite once more"; *Portrait*, 269; *Anselm*, 154.

duke when called up;<sup>210</sup> in fact, one conflict between Rufus and Anselm concerned the quality of the knights Anselm had provided for a campaign in Wales.<sup>211</sup>

Ducal control was not always a bad thing, for the Norman rulers had traditionally encouraged monastic reform. At the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, Duke Richard II had invited the Cluniac reformer William of Volpiano to head the abbey at Fécamp, where he established an influential monastic school.<sup>212</sup> At the same time, however, this monastic reform was completely beholden to the dukes, who ensured that the reform did not embrace the secular clergy, whose prelates often came from the ducal family.<sup>213</sup> Richard II had even been so far-sighted as to obtain a grant from the pope which prohibited the bishop of Fécamp from excommunicating him.<sup>214</sup>

By the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century, Cantor asserts, "the Norman episcopate was completely in the Duke's hand," with papal recognition and tacit approval.<sup>215</sup> When William the Conqueror came to England, he brought this system with him, exerting tight control over the English church. According to Eadmer, one could not recognize a pope, receive a papal letter, excommunicate a baron or minister, or issue decrees in ecclesiastical council without the king's consent, and these were but some of the *usus atque leges*, the customs and laws, of the Normans.<sup>216</sup> Anselm had been part of the Norman system, in which lay

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<sup>210</sup> Cantor, 23, 28.

<sup>211</sup> HN 77-8.

<sup>212</sup> Cantor, 21-2.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> HN 10; Anselm reports several of these in Ep. 210.



investiture was firmly ensconced, for over three decades, and was surely not ignorant of the Norman prerogatives.

He was, however, ignorant of the decrees being issued at various Church councils. The scene of Anselm's investiture Eadmer recounts is so dramatic—the bishops forcibly pried open Anselm's fingers in order to place the pastoral staff in his hand, while he “uttered groans of anguish for the pain which he suffered”—it is easy to lose sight of the fact that, during the entire process, Anselm never objected to the act of royal investiture itself.<sup>217</sup> He objected to becoming archbishop.<sup>218</sup> His views at this time did not encompass anything approaching the Gregorian program, as Southern notes:

He had been nominated as archbishop by the king . . . in an outrageously uncanonical fashion which had been explicitly forbidden by Pope Gregory VII fifteen years earlier. According to this ruling, it was illegal for an archbishop to be nominated by a lay ruler, and worse still for him to receive from the king's hands the pastoral staff which was the symbol of his spiritual office. But Anselm had received both his office and his staff from the king, and he had then gone on to do homage—also forbidden by papal decree—to the king in the old style. And, not only that, he had received his pastoral staff and performed his homage in the presence and with the assent of bishops who were still, four years after Urban II's election, undecided between Urban and his imperially nominated rival Clement III.<sup>219</sup>

Eadmer declares, at the beginning of the *Historia Novarum*, that putting an end to lay investiture in England was Anselm's goal,<sup>220</sup> but what he later saw as the theme of Anselm's archiepiscopate does not prevent the details of his historical narrative from offering their own story, which makes the scene of Anselm's investiture all the more

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<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>218</sup> Ep. 148.

<sup>219</sup> Southern, “Saint Anselm at Canterbury: His Mission of Reconciliation,” AABC, 18-19. See also Southern, *Portrait*, 190-1.

<sup>220</sup> HN 2.

authentic. Not only did Anselm offer no objections to the king conferring the episcopal staff, he readily consecrated bishops invested in the same manner.<sup>221</sup> Even after the Council of Rockingham, in a letter to none other than a papal legate, Anselm affirmed that he had sworn fealty and homage to Rufus; what he denied was that Rufus was a schismatic king (which would have also made Anselm schismatic, that is, a supporter of the anti-pope Clement).<sup>222</sup> In another letter from 1095, this one to Archbishop Hugh, Anselm stated flatly, "The King gave me the archbishopric. . . ." (*Rex mihi dedit archiepiscopatum*).<sup>223</sup> No better proof could be had that Anselm was oblivious of the Gregorian decrees, if in two letters to Gregorian bishops he could so casually speak of receiving the archiepiscopate at the king's hands, a man to whom he swore fealty and homage. These circumstances argue strongly against Anselm being anything like a Gregorian at the commencement of his archiepiscopate.

The fact that Anselm was no Gregorian did not, however, preclude conflict between king and archbishop, as the first year of Anselm's archiepiscopate would bring home to him. Anselm was very interested reforming the church in England now that he was its head, and the key to this was securing a place as Rufus' chief counselor on moral and religious matters, not only for the church but for the nation as a whole. This had been one of Anselm's demands, once he had been forcibly invested but not yet consecrated,<sup>224</sup> but he was not successful in this endeavor, for Rufus was far less interested in reform than he was in using the church as a source of revenue. He granted

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<sup>221</sup> Southern, *Portrait*, 190-1.

<sup>222</sup> Ep. 192.

<sup>223</sup> Ep. 176.

<sup>224</sup> HN 39-40.

bishoprics only in return for a simoniacal payment; the less lucrative abbacies remained dormant.<sup>225</sup> The king had also benefited from keeping the see of Canterbury vacant for four years after Lanfranc's death. He had dispersed some monks of Christ Church, given the rest an allowance, and then farmed out Canterbury's holdings, a practice imitated in other bishoprics he kept vacant.<sup>226</sup>

Southern suggests that this situation may have helped convince Anselm of the need for an archbishop, for if he persisted in his refusal, "the long vacancy at Canterbury, which had already lasted four years, would have gone on indefinitely, to the detriment of the spiritual life of the community at Canterbury and of the people of England generally. . . . It is quite clear that a prolonged vacancy would have been the consequence of Anselm's refusal."<sup>227</sup> The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle commented bitterly on Rufus' policies upon his death in 1100:

He humiliated God's church; and in his days, when the elders fell in bishoprics and abbacies he either granted them all in return for money, or held in his own hand and put out at rent, because he wanted to be the heir of every man, ordained and lay. And thus on the day that he fell, he had in his own hand the archbishopric in Canterbury [Anselm was in exile] and the bishopric in Winchester and that in Salisbury and eleven abbacies, all put out at rent.<sup>228</sup>

It was abuses such as these, and not the Norman *usus atque leges* which facilitated them, which Anselm initially opposed, but in doing so he brought the contradictions of that system to the fore. When a ruler friendly to reform sat on the throne, such an arrangement worked well, with clergy supplying much-needed

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<sup>225</sup> Cantor, 43-4.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>227</sup> Southern, "St. Anselm at Canterbury," 19-20.

<sup>228</sup> ASC 1100.

administrative cadre and the crown endowing monasteries and dispensing financially lucrative ecclesiastical appointments. Rufus' father, William the Conqueror, had been such a ruler, and, as Walter Fröhlich argues, the evidence suggests that the elder William and Anselm had had a special relationship, one more along the lines of what Anselm envisioned in his initial demands.<sup>229</sup> Contradictions invariably came to a head, however, when a man with little interest in reform came to the throne alongside a monk-archbishop intent on reform. "Taking him all in all," Southern comments, "Rufus is the most secular of all medieval English kings, the one who used the Church most consistently for his own material ends."<sup>230</sup> The confluence of such a king with a monk determined to defend the church now that he was its head precipitated the open struggle between two tendencies in the Norman ecclesiastical establishment, monastic reform and ducal rights.

It was upon Rufus' return to England after an unsuccessful expedition in Normandy that he and Anselm had their most serious conflict yet. Rufus had good reason to believe Anselm was infringing on his right to recognize a pope at a time when there were two contenders to the see of St. Peter. At the same time, Anselm almost certainly did not intend to do so, and he saw no way around the problem: he had to have his pallium in order to be the canonical archbishop, and he had already sworn obedience to Urban. The conflict inevitably forced Anselm to think about the tenuousness of his dual allegiance: sacrificing his professed obedience to Urban was never an option, but he earnestly hoped that there was some way to resolve the problem without giving up either

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<sup>229</sup> Fröhlich, 101-110, especially 103.

<sup>230</sup> Southern, *Anselm*, 145.

*The Anglo-Norman Episcopate*

Anselm, although head of the English church, would not receive much aid from the Anglo-Norman bishops, nearly all of whom would side by Rufus. The idea that they were afraid for their positions, although amply justified by Rufus' actions at the end of the council,<sup>236</sup> only points to a deeper problem, the background of the Anglo-Norman episcopate. In the wake of the Norman conquest, the English church had been purged of all but one of its native bishops, and all of William I's new appointments were foreigners, most of them from the Norman church.<sup>237</sup> There was also a heavy concentration of royal clerks among the new bishops: ten of the fifteen bishops appointed by William I came from the royal chancery or other administrative office, as was the case with six of the eight his son appointed.<sup>238</sup> These bishops had been chancellors and royal officials, rewarded by the king with a bishopric and its attendant revenue. They had not risen through the ranks of the church but "had spent their early careers in close contact with the person of the royal majesty and in advancing his powers."<sup>239</sup> To the king these bishops owed their enviable position and high status; it would unreasonable to expect them to act otherwise than to support their lord, and this goes a long way toward explaining their behavior at Rockingham.

It would be a mistake, however, to let things rest with such a deterministic schema, and there were important exceptions to this royal-episcopal connection. The

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<sup>236</sup> HN 65; see the following chapter.

<sup>237</sup> Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 400.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 397, Fig. 12.

<sup>239</sup> Cantor, 33.

leader of the episcopal opposition at Rockingham, Bishop William of Durham, came from a monastic, not a curialist, background.<sup>240</sup> The Bishop of Durham bitterly opposed Anselm, and Eadmer reports rumors that he coveted the archiepiscopate himself, seeking to drive Anselm out of England.<sup>241</sup> “Although exiled for his disloyalty to Rufus in the rebellion of 1088,” Vaughn relates, “Bishop William had been restored in 1091 and had since risen high in Rufus’ entourage. Ironically, Bishop William had himself appealed to papal authority when on trial for treason in 1088, but he was now a devoted royalist.”<sup>242</sup> On the other side of the conflict, it is quite possible that Bishop Ralph Luffa of Chichester, a recent appointee from the royal chancery, supported Anselm at Rockingham.<sup>243</sup>

Nevertheless, the fact that during this time only three of the fourteen bishops besides Anselm had not served in the royal chancery is of momentous significance, especially when we consider that apart from the Bishop of Durham, the two remaining non-curialist bishops were Anselm’s only supporters.<sup>244</sup> According to Eadmer, Bishop Gundulf of Rochester the only bishop at the council who refused to renounce submission and obedience to Anselm.<sup>245</sup> Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester, the sole holdover from pre-Conquest days and the only Anglo-Saxon bishop, encouraged Anselm’s reform efforts

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<sup>240</sup> HN 59; Cantor, 33-4.

<sup>241</sup> HN 60.

<sup>242</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 182; see also Southern’s discussion of Bishop William of Durham in *Anselm*, 147-50.

<sup>243</sup> Cantor, 81, 36.

<sup>244</sup> I do not include Bishop Herbert Losinga of Norwich (who opposed Anselm) in this category, despite his monastic background, since he had also served in the *curia regis*; see Cantor, 37-8.

<sup>245</sup> VA 86.

but died shortly before the council.<sup>246</sup> Southern offers a nuanced conclusion regarding the background of the Anglo-Norman episcopate:

These simple statistics . . . tell us very little about the character of the episcopate. But they indicate that in any discussion, practical issues (not necessarily bad) would have more weight than any possible theoretical considerations. This made an immediate barrier between Anselm and almost everyone with whom he had to deal.<sup>247</sup>

While the Anglo-Norman bishops did not divide solely on lines of social background, and while Anselm was not completely isolated from his peers, there can be no doubt that he introduced a disruptive element into what had been a rather cozy relationship between the episcopate and the crown. "In the early Norman period," Barlow explains, "the archbishops were important largely because of their traditional closeness to the king."<sup>248</sup> Anselm's authority over his subordinate bishops, prior to the rise of strong ecclesiastical administration, could not be as immediate as the authority wielded by the Anglo-Norman king:

Everything depended on the king. Although the archbishop was the spiritual father of his suffragans and had a claim to their support, loyalty, and counsel, there is little evidence before 1109 [the year of Anselm's death] of either provincial fellowship or personal loyalty to the superior. Anselm's bishops were in general hostile, and when he most needed their advice it was usually withheld. At his trials his suffragans preferred to sit with the king.<sup>249</sup>

Anselm's persistent attempt to hold an ecclesiastical reform council despite Rufus' clear opposition was only one way in which he upset the status quo. In a letter on the eve of Rockingham, Anselm pointed to several major disputes in the first year of his

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<sup>246</sup> Ep. 171.

<sup>247</sup> Southern, *Anselm*, 147.

<sup>248</sup> Barlow, 142.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-3.

office in which the bishops had tried to persuade him to go along with the king's wishes.<sup>250</sup> Years later, writing to Pope Paschal II, Anselm would recall, "When I sought advice on all these and other similar matters, everybody in his kingdom, even my own suffragan bishops, refused to give me any counsel except that which agreed with the King's will."<sup>251</sup> As Cantor puts it, "Anselm's alienation of the sympathy of his episcopal colleagues in the two years following his consecration placed him in a very weak position at Rockingham."<sup>252</sup> In a letter to the bishops of Ireland shortly after the council, Anselm summarized his difficulties with the Anglo-Norman prelates:

After being installed [as archbishop], I began to consider diligently what my duty was to Christ, to his church in that place and to my office. I wished to cut back evils by pastoral rule, to restrain usurpers and to bring back any disorder which fell within my domain to their due order. As a result of this, I have experienced that those who should have been my helpers in God's cause took deep offence, and God's cause, which should have flourished through me goes to ruin in my presence. For this reason, revered fathers—and I groan, I admit, when I speak to you—the bitterest sorrows overcome me when I remember the fruitful peace I have lost and consider the fruitless danger into which I have fallen.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Ep. 176.

<sup>251</sup> Ep. 210.

<sup>252</sup> Cantor, 80-1. Note that less than fifteen months, not two years, had passed since Anselm's consecration on 4 December 1093; *HN* 41-2.

<sup>253</sup> Ep. 198



## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE COUNCIL OF ROCKINGHAM, 1095

*Eadmer's Reliability and Anselm's Views*

Eadmer was an eyewitness to the Council of Rockingham and in the *Historia Novorum* presented a rather complete account of its proceedings. In writing the *Historia Novorum*, Eadmer certainly wished to present his superior's conduct in the most favorable light, and, as discussed previously, he decided that the conflict over lay investiture was to be the theme of Anselm's archiepiscopate.<sup>254</sup> Southern points out the problems raised by relying on the *Historia*:

Eadmer did not give final shape to his notes until after Anselm's death, and, when he did so, he distorted the whole picture of Anselm's early years to suggest an awareness of the incompatibility between the political structure of the Church in relation to the king, as practised by Lanfranc, and the law of the Church, of which Anselm at that time knew nothing. Consequently, anything in the *Historia Novorum* before 1100 which reports Anselm's consciousness of this theme bears the marks of retrospective reassessment.<sup>255</sup>

While Southern is surely correct regarding the backdating of the Investiture Contest, to disregard anything the *Historia* reports of Anselm's developing political consciousness is to exclude the possibility that Anselm's thoughts on secular authority and the Church were indeed evolving due to his experiences as archbishop. Southern argues that the change in Anselm's attitude toward the Gregorian Reform came during

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<sup>254</sup> See HN 2.

<sup>255</sup> Southern, *Portrait*, 248.

his first exile, from 1097 to 1100, when Anselm came under more direct influence from Archbishop Hugh of Lyons.<sup>256</sup> These years undoubtedly had a profound impact on Anselm, but to reach such a conclusion by disregarding anything in the *Historia* to the contrary seems to beg the question. It would be hard to believe that Anselm's tumultuous years as archbishop under William Rufus could not have led him to at least suspect the incompatibility between Norman customs and his responsibilities to his flock.

Southern remarks that "this flaw in the *Historia Novorum* is to some extent corrected by the *Vita Anselmi*, which deserves more attention than it has received as a record of Anselm's permanent interests and thoughts."<sup>257</sup> The *Vita* was a work of hagiography rather than a political narrative, and Eadmer wrote much of it—perhaps as far as 1100—while Anselm was still alive, more or less contemporaneous with the events described.<sup>258</sup> Michael Staunton also writes favorably of the *Vita*, arguing that Eadmer's "method involved not only accurate and detailed reporting but also the careful selection and organization of the material at his disposal."<sup>259</sup> The *Vita*, however, also contains an account of the Council of Rockingham, and while it is shorter, it accords with the account

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 287-8.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>258</sup> VA 150-1; see also Southern's introduction, x. Southern distinguishes between the two works thusly: "Eadmer himself is the best witness to the limited scope of the *Historia Novorum*, for he wrote his *Vita Anselmi* to complete the picture by giving an account of Anselm's *Life and Conversation*. By the word 'conversation', he meant more than simply private talk, though he reports much of this: he meant everything connected with Anselm's intellectual and religious behaviour and manner of life; everything, in brief, at the centre of Anselm's life. By contrast, the *Historia Novorum* concentrated on the theme set out in its title and preface: the study of the *New Things* that had come to pass in England since the Conquest—in particular the new rules about the homage and investiture of prelates, which (according to Eadmer's preface) had been introduced into England by William the Conqueror in defiance of the principles of ecclesiastical order"; *Portrait*, 248.

<sup>259</sup> Michael Staunton, "Eadmer's *Vita Anselmi*: a reinterpretation," *Journal of Medieval History* 23, no. 1 (1997): 3.

given in the *Historia Novorum*. Both narratives, moreover, suggest that Anselm's attitude toward the "the political structure of the Church in relation to the king" was undergoing a transformation at this time, and this claim, as will be seen, is supported by Anselm's correspondence during that year.

In denying any early development of Anselm's ecclesio-political views, Southern refers to "the law of the Church [in a Gregorian sense], of which Anselm at that time knew nothing," but there were more ways for Anselm's ideas on the subject to develop than for him to simply learn of the papal decrees and then enforce them. Southern rightly emphasizes the way in which Anselm's obedience led him to enforce the prohibitions on lay investiture and homage, beginning in 1100,<sup>260</sup> but he seems to have overlooked the way in which Anselm's unequivocal obedience to the pope—which William Rufus perceived to be a threat to his own prerogatives—had just as formative an impact on him, half a decade before he witnessed the Gregorian forces at work in the Council of Rome. Southern certainly does not underestimate the role of obedience in Anselm's attitude toward the Church and secular authority, but he does not address the possibility that staunchly holding to Urban against Rufus's opposition was just as much a matter of obedience as upholding Gregorian decrees under Henry I, with similar effects on Anselm's ideas. Small wonder, then, that for Southern the Council of Rockingham was "largely a display of shadow-boxing,"<sup>261</sup> a view which will be investigated in greater detail further on.

To Southern, Anselm "did not . . . deny the king's right to decide which of the two rival claimants the kingdom should recognize. There was a right decision and a

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<sup>260</sup> See Epp. 213 and 214.

<sup>261</sup> Southern, *Anselm*, 154; *idem*, *Portrait*, 269.

wrong decision, but it was for the king to make it, and if the wrong one were made he would leave the kingdom.”<sup>262</sup> If the dispute were really so cordial, trivial even,<sup>263</sup> and the king had but to make his decision, one wonders why all the nobility and ecclesiastics of England needed to convene and what they could possibly discuss. Far more plausible is Eadmer’s assertion that the dispute centered around the question of whether Anselm could hold a dual allegiance to the king and a pope yet to be recognized as legitimate by that king.<sup>264</sup>

A look at Anselm’s correspondence before the Council of Rockingham is enough to demonstrate in what direction Rufus’ policies were moving him. Scarcely two months after Anselm’s consecration, Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester, the last of the Anglo-Saxon bishops, exhorted the new archbishop to defend the Church:

Your prudence knows of the daily labors and oppression of holy Church, and that those who ought to protect her are the instigators of the evils oppressing her. In order to repel those enemies and to defend holy Church against such people, your holiness has been placed in the highest stronghold. Therefore, your holiness should not doubt, *no fear of secular power should humble you*, no partiality should cause you to waver, but you should start out bravely and accomplish with the help of God what you have started.<sup>265</sup>

There was nothing necessarily Gregorian in those words, although they certainly accord with the spirit of the reform; this admonition came from a much more experienced bishop who was able to put Rufus’ reign—even the Norman rule as a whole—in perspective. After a year in office, Anselm would be using similar language to describe his conflicts with the king:

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<sup>262</sup> Southern, *Anselm*, 154.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>264</sup> HN 52-3.

<sup>265</sup> Ep. 171; italics mine.

I asked that a council be called, which has not taken place in England for many years, in order to correct certain things in the kingdom which appeared in no way tolerable. I also admonished him [Rufus] to correct something which he appeared to me to be doing in a way other than was proper [possibly referring to Rufus' rumored homosexuality]. Openly angry with me at this, he showed that I had lost his love. I replied that I preferred him to be angry with me than God with him, and thus I left his presence.<sup>266</sup>

Speaking of Rufus' plan to alienate some of Canterbury's lands, Anselm relates his determination to defend the English church against the king's encroachments:

Now, since the king is the advocate of the church and I am its guardian, what will be said in future except that, because the King did it and the Archbishop by upholding it confirmed it, it should be ratified? It is therefore better for me in the sight of God that I should not thus hold possession of the lands of the church and should, if I am permitted, make the office of bishop poor in the manner of the apostles as a witness to the violence done against it than by holding it diminished I should make its diminution irreparable.<sup>267</sup>

Anselm had arrived at a position in January 1095 that the Gregorian pope Paschal II would unsuccessfully attempt nearly two decades later in order to end the Investiture Contest in Germany—to give up the lands belonging to the Church in return for undisputed supremacy in spiritual matters, including the appointment of bishops.<sup>268</sup> To be sure, Anselm's situation did not yet involve a dispute over investiture, and his notion was clearly intended more as a protest than as a long-term solution to the difficulties besetting the Church in England, but these differences should not prevent one from recognizing the fundamental issue underlying the problems of Paschal in 1110 and Anselm as early as 1095—the conflict between the Church and the secular power which was supposed to be its advocate. If the present king could take away Church lands, and a future king could not be relied upon to correct the situation, but only to confirm the

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<sup>266</sup> Ep. 176.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Blumenthal, 169.

oppressive measures, then the Church could no longer look upon this power as its advocate. The Church would have to rely on its own powers, and Anselm clearly regarded these as spiritual. These were Anselm's thoughts in 1095, and thus Southern's disregard of anything before Anselm's exile appears unjustified.

While Southern disregards any hint of Gregorian thinking in Anselm prior to his exile, Cantor goes to the opposite extreme, arguing that getting the Council of Rockingham convened was nothing less than the first victory for Anselm's Gregorian program: "Within fifteen months of his consecration, Anselm had thus succeeded in bringing before the lay and ecclesiastical magnates a fundamental aspect of Gregorian reform doctrine—the ultimate superiority of the pope to all secular rulers."<sup>269</sup> Apart from the error in supposing Anselm to be a Gregorian activist from the beginning, a point addressed earlier, Cantor misstates the purpose of the Council of Rockingham. Rufus denied that Anselm could simultaneously hold allegiance to him and to a pope he had not recognized, and at Rockingham this was the question was to be decided.<sup>270</sup> The events of the council would certainly turn Anselm's mind toward questions of ultimate obedience, but by no stretch of the imagination could a king's council in England decide whether or not the pope was superior to all secular rulers. The views of Southern on one side, and Cantor on the other, prevent them from appreciating how much Anselm's ideas were changing during his tumultuous struggles with William Rufus.

Anselm understood the importance of maintaining his obedience to Urban against the threats of Rufus; both he and the king thought the matter grave enough to present before all the bishops, abbots, and nobles. Anselm requested advice from Archbishop

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<sup>269</sup> Cantor, 78.

<sup>270</sup> HN 53; VA 85.

Hugh just before the council, and he may very well have asked it of Bishop Wulfstan had the prelate still been alive. Anselm's letters, the *Historia Novorum*, the *Vita Anselmi*, and subsequent events all point to Rockingham as a watershed in the developing sophistication of Anselm's thoughts on the secular and spiritual powers. Eadmer's eyewitness account of Rockingham, especially on those points covered by both the *Historia* and *Vita*, is generally reliable,<sup>271</sup> although that does not save one from approaching each point critically. Anselm's arguments as Eadmer presented them have, moreover, an ad hoc, rough-and-tumble feel to it, as the archbishop searched for ever more solid ground on which to state his case. It is this unrefined quality that lends further authenticity to the account, where a more polished and developed argumentation might lead one to suspect after-the-fact doctoring of the proceedings. Of course, one may object that Eadmer and Anselm would naturally have more or less the same bias regarding the council, but it must be remembered always that this study is concerned with Anselm's developing ideas. It is, accordingly, more important here to establish what Anselm may have experienced at the council, *as* he experienced it, rather than to re-create what we do not have, a transcript of the proceedings.

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<sup>271</sup> Some may object to the use of the word "reliable" here, even when it thus qualified. In general, this study follows Southern's arguments with regard to Eadmer's trustworthiness in recording events. On the one hand, the *Historia* "is an account probably compiled from notes made on the spot, by an observant eye-witness who was closer to Anselm than anyone else. . . . There is nothing like it for any other contemporary figure, and there are not many such records for any medieval character." On the other hand, the *Historia* becomes unreliable inasmuch as it "does not offer, or pretend to offer, a complete account of Anselm's activities, and more important, because it is in some vital respects fundamentally misleading" regarding Anselm's supposed "awareness of the incompatibility between the political structure of the Church in relation to the king"; *Portrait*, 248. These two objections are obviated somewhat, as Southern admits, when one incorporates the *Vita* and, most importantly, Anselm's correspondence. For this reason, every attempt has been made to cross-reference these three sources whenever possible in the following discussion, but for some of Anselm's statements, the *Historia* is the only source. It will be evaluated critically, but, as Southern remarks, "Nothing can replace it." Is "reliable" too anachronistic a term when describing Eadmer, and was he more interested in verisimilitude than truth? Perhaps the best response to this is to note that Eadmer's account of Anselm's words at Rockingham accord far better with Anselm's letters at this time than it does with Eadmer's own proclaimed theme. In the final analysis, the *Historia* is the best explanation of the how Anselm arrived at the ideas one finds in the archbishop's own words.

*Day One*

At Rockingham, it was the bishops' persistent line of questioning which led Anselm to formulate his views on the relationship between the secular and spiritual spheres in a more theoretical fashion. The first day, February 25<sup>th</sup>, witnessed merely a recitation of the opposing arguments in the dispute, with no reference to broader principles of political philosophy. In Rockingham church, wherein the council took place, Eadmer has Anselm calling the bishops, abbots, and feudal magnates out of a meeting with the king, in which, "from the first hour of the day the King and his followers secretly busied themselves weaving their devices against Anselm."<sup>272</sup> In front of these and "a great company of monks, clergy and laity", Anselm stated his case.<sup>273</sup>

Although he addressed the assembly as "Sons of the Church of God", Anselm did not expand the dispute into a broader contest of principle between Church and King; his words are marked by a quite un-Gregorian understatement: "There has been some discussion between our Lord the King and myself which seems to give rise to a specific disagreement."<sup>274</sup> He recounted the recent dispute over whether his efforts to go to Rome for his pallium constituted a usurpation of the king's prerogatives, but even here he did not base his argument on the idea that spiritual obligations held precedence over secular. Anselm's argument turned, rather, on the fact that he had already, as abbot in Normandy, recognized Urban as pope. He then repeated his great resistance to becoming archbishop in the first place:

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<sup>272</sup> HN 53-4.

<sup>273</sup> HN 54.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.



I opposed it with all my might intent on escaping the primacy; but you would not have it so. Besides much else I declared openly that I had already recognized as Pope this Urban about whom this complaint is now made against me and that so long as he lived I would not for a single hour depart from submission to him. At that time there was no one to say a word against me on that account. But what happened? Why, you seized hold of me and compelled me to undertake the burden of you all. . . . But lest anyone not knowing my conscience in this matter should be offended in me, I protest (I speak the truth) that, were it not for submission to the Will of God, I should that day, if offered the choice, have chosen to be thrown upon a blazing pyre and to be burned alive rather than to be raised to the dignity of the archbishopric.<sup>275</sup>

Continuing his opening remarks, Anselm mentioned the truce he had requested and obtained from Rufus, so that he could put the matter before the entire episcopate. He asked for the bishops' advice on how to reconcile his obedience to the pope and his allegiance to the king. Thus far, notably, Anselm still framed the problem in such a way that the burden of proof was on him to show that these loyalties were not in conflict; in other words, the default position was that there was such a conflict, and this is what troubled Anselm:

To me it is a terrible thing to show disrespect to and disown the Vicar of St. Peter; a terrible thing, too, to transgress the allegiance which under God I have promised to maintain to the King; terrible most of all to be told that it will be impossible for me to be true to one of these loyalties without being false to the other.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> HN 55. One might detect a hint of hyperbole in Anselm's insistence that he had declared that "as long as he lived I would not for a single hour depart from submission to him", an exaggeration that would certainly suit Anselm's purposes at the council. Eadmer, moreover, failed to include this particular protest about papal allegiance in his account of Anselm's forced investiture; the first time it comes to light in the *Historia* is only after Anselm's investiture, when he includes this recognition of Urban as one of the conditions of his consecration. Nevertheless, it is quite believable that at his investiture, Anselm could have included this among the many other reasons why he should not become archbishop; Eadmer mentions, after all, quite a slew of other objections Anselm offered: he was too old; as a monk, he had always shunned worldly affairs; he had pre-existing obligations to the Duke of Normandy, the Archbishop of Rouen, and the monks at Bec; HN 39-40. Even if Anselm only mentioned this particular obstacle after his investiture but before his consecration, he would be right, at Rockingham, in citing it as a problem about which he had never received a satisfactory answer.

<sup>276</sup> HN 55-56.

Anselm was in a most difficult position, and the bishops recognized this, replying, "The advice you seek of us rests with yourself."<sup>277</sup> They presented no way out but for Anselm to "put aside every other consideration" and to devote himself entirely to the king; only then could they offer him advice, that is, at the very point when it would no longer be needed. They would soon regret putting the resolution of the problem in Anselm's hands. For the time being, there was nothing left but to adjourn in order that the bishops could report Anselm's words to the king, and thus the first day came to an end.<sup>278</sup>

### *Day Two*

The next morning, the bishops opened the proceedings by restating their proposition—they would gladly give advice if Anselm would recognize the prerogatives of the king. "But," they added, "if what you are looking for from us is advice in accordance with the Will of God which might be in any way contrary to the Will of the King, then your asking is but lost labour, you will never see us upholding you in any such way as that."<sup>279</sup> In this particular phrasing, Eadmer would appear to have overplayed his hand; as beholden as the bishops were to royal favor, it strains credulity to envision them disowning God outright. The chronicler's description further underscores this interpretation of his words: "Having said this they fell silent and bowed their heads as though to meet the reproaches that he [Anselm] would cast upon them."<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> HN 56.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.; VA 86.

<sup>279</sup> HN 56.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

What here seems like propaganda, however, may be nothing more than a favorable account of a real event, and there is another interpretation of the bishops' words that is just as plausible as this one. Rather than referring to a situation wherein one must choose between the will of God and the will of the king, the bishops could have been disputing the very idea that such a situation could arise. In support of this interpretation, the *Vita* records that the bishops, in reaction to Anselm's comments later on, "raised a loud clamour that he [Anselm] was blaspheming against the king, simply because in his kingdom and without his consent he had dared to ascribe anything to God."<sup>281</sup> The bishops seem to have been saying: Do not ask us for advice on following the will of God rather than the will of the king, for the king's will is the best indication of the divine will. Although this initially sounds odd coming from bishops, there were in fact numerous biblical injunctions to this effect; these passages from Scripture, moreover, were still in currency, despite the waning of theocratic kingship. Most famously, in Paul's letter to the Romans, the apostle reminded the Christian community that rulers are appointed by God:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: *the powers that be are ordained of God*. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. . . . For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.<sup>282</sup>

Further on, Paul gave advice that would sound eminently suitable to any defender of the Norman *usus atque leges*: "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom

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<sup>281</sup> VA 86.

<sup>282</sup> Romans 13:1-4, KJV, italics mine.

tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.”<sup>283</sup>

The defenders of royal prerogatives in the Investiture Contest were well aware of these admonitions. Consider the following passage from one of the “Anonymous of York” or Norman Anonymous tracts, written in defense of theocratic kingship and contemporary with Anselm’s archiepiscopate:

No one should take precedence by right over [the king], who is blessed with so many and such great blessings, who is consecrated and made like unto God with so many and such great sacraments, for no one is consecrated and made like God with more or greater sacraments than he is, nor indeed with equivalent ones, and so *no one is co-equal with him*. Therefore he is not to be called a layman, for his is the anointed of the Lord, a God through grace, the supreme ruler, supreme shepherd, master, defender and instructor of holy church, lord over his brothers, worthy to be adored by all men, *chief and highest prelate*.<sup>284</sup>

Cantor cautions that the “Anonymous” views were rather extreme for the period, but “the old conception of the kingship still had influence among learned curialists, and it still continued to play a part in political life.”<sup>285</sup> It is quite plausible that, knowing their words would be reported to the king, the bishops would have said exactly what Eadmer attributes to them; what is more, most of them probably would have meant it. Cantor offers a statement more typical “of a typical Anglo-Norman bishop’s attitude toward to the King” than the Anonymous tract above, a letter from Bishop Herbert Losinga of Norwich to Henry I:

I am yours and all that I have is yours, and for the things which are yours I am bound continually to do you service. . . . All that I have has been collected through your favor, and is preserved to me by your protection. . . . I implore our Redeemer and Savior . . . that He would bestow upon you, in return for the favor you have confirmed, a worthy recompense.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Romans 13:7.

<sup>284</sup> Tierney, 78, italics mine.

<sup>285</sup> Cantor, 196.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

These words are not so far off from the ideas found in the Anonymous tracts. Even if the bishops had reservations about the sacramental character of kingship, they were fully prepared to defend the Norman customs, which, by Eadmer's own admission, decreed that a pope could only be recognized with royal consent.<sup>287</sup> In such a system, it was self-evident that the will of the king was the means of establishing the will of God, at least as far as the question of the rightful pope; Anselm would indeed be on the defensive. The archbishop mounted a vigorous counter-attack, however, the opening salvo in a bitter conflict:

Then Father Anselm, lifting up his eyes, his face all aglow, in an awe-inspiring voice said: "Since you who are called shepherds of the Christian folk and you who are called princes of the people refuse to give me, your father, any advice except such as conforms to the will of one man, I will fly to the chief Shepherd and Prince of all; yes, to the Angel of great counsel I will fly; and in this business of mine, nay rather of himself and of his Church, I will obtain from him the counsel that I am to follow."<sup>288</sup>

With these words, Anselm not only proclaimed his determination to seek Pope Urban regardless of the king's customs, he put the question in an entirely different framework. William Rufus and most of the episcopate clearly saw this as an internal issue: there were two claimants to the see of St. Peter; thus, it was up to the king to decide who he would recognize. Anselm, however, declared that this issue was the pope's above all: "and in this business of mine, nay rather of himself [Urban] and of his Church. . . ." The matter was internal in Anselm's phrasing, but internal to the Catholic Church, not to the kingdom of England. Of course, Anselm's declared course of action would produce a solution as pre-determined as would following the bishops'

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<sup>287</sup> HN 10.

<sup>288</sup> HN 57.

recommendation to first devote himself to the king and then seek their advice, for Urban's views on his own legitimacy could hardly be in doubt. It must be remembered, however, that for Anselm the question of Urban's legitimacy was already decided. For him, the original issue had been his efforts to seek advice from Urban on other matters; only later, through Anselm's attempt to go to Rome, did it become a matter of deciding who had the right to recognize the pope, an issue which seemed to Anselm a dead letter.

Anselm continued in his attack, using a biblical passage much beloved by the Gregorians: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Christ had said. "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."<sup>289</sup> After quoting another passage, Anselm concluded, "We hold the same words as spoken first to the Vicar of St. Peter and through him to all the rest of the bishops who are the successors of the Apostles, not spoken to any emperor, nor to any king, or duke or earl."<sup>290</sup> Anselm thus offered a well-known argument for regarding the pope as the Vicar of St. Peter and the bishops as heirs to the apostles, both having pride of place before any claims of king or nobleman.

There is good reason to believe that Anselm did indeed subscribe to and affirm the Petrine interpretation of Scripture, that the pope is the Vicar of Christ. In a letter written only three months later to Bishop Walter of Albano, a papal legate, Anselm recalls Walter's words "St. Peter the Apostle, in the person of his vicar Urban" (*Petrus*

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid.; Matthew 16:18-19.

<sup>290</sup> HN 57. Similar wording is employed in the *Vita*, referring to the king's demand that Anselm renounce "his obedience to the vicar of Saint Peter" (*vicario Beati Petri se ulterius obæditurum*), VA 86.

*apostolus per vicarium suum Urbanum*) without drawing any attention to this phrase,<sup>291</sup> and he used the phrase as an argument in and of itself in later letters.<sup>292</sup> Anselm would eventually take the pallium from the altar of Canterbury “as though from the hand of St. Peter.”<sup>293</sup> Nevertheless, Anselm’s open affirmation of Petrine doctrine at Rockingham cannot have sat well with his opponents. One must still avoid, however, the temptation to see this declaration as a Gregorian stance, for Anselm’s next words, place it within another context entirely, one in which the temporal and the spiritual each have their own proper spheres:

But, where it is our bounden duty to submit ourselves to earthly princes and to serve them, that same Angel of great counsel teaches and enjoins us when he says, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.”<sup>294</sup> These are the words, these are the counsels, of God. These I approve, these I accept, from these I will on no account depart. So I would have you one and all know that in those things which are God’s I will yield obedience to the Vicar of St. Peter and in those things which rightly appertain to the earthly sovereignty of my lord the King to him I will yield loyal counsel and help to the utmost of my power.<sup>295</sup>

Anselm had dramatically turned the tables. The Caesar and Christ passage, reported in both the *Historia* and the *Vita*, established that one could owe different obligations to a secular ruler and God; thus, the burden of proof was now on the bishops to show the conflict in this situation. Rather than Anselm having to explain how a dual allegiance was possible, his opponents now had to prove that such an allegiance was contradictory, with Scripture already weighted in the balance against them. There is

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<sup>291</sup> Ep. 192.

<sup>292</sup> Epp. 248, 262.

<sup>293</sup> HN 71-2.

<sup>294</sup> Matt. 22:21; Luke 20:25.

<sup>295</sup> HN 57.; see also VA 86, where “Anselm altogether confounded them” with these words.

good reason, therefore, to believe that Eadmer did not exaggerate the fury of their reaction: "Then all present were greatly perturbed and rose up in haste and much tumult, voicing their dismay with confused cries, so that you would think that they were with one accord crying out that he was guilty of death. Turning upon him they said angrily, 'You can be sure that we will never bear that message for you to our lord.'"<sup>296</sup>

The Caesar and Christ passage resonated not only with the substance of the debate, but also with the form; it must have seemed eminently appropriate to Anselm's situation, in which the bishops, not unlike the Pharisees, were trying to get him to say something that would enable secular authority to condemn him. As with Christ, he did not oblige them. Anselm's clever move, however, could serve only as a stop-gap measure, for in the end it would be insufficient. Everyone at the council realized that, theoretical arguments aside, here was one instance where the loyalties to pope and king were in conflict, so there was ultimately no need to show the possibility of such a conflict. The problem was in showing that one of those loyalties ultimately trumped the other, and in resolving this, Anselm would turn to a central strand of thought in his theology. For now, however, his challenge put the bishops on the defensive.

According to Eadmer, Anselm himself went to the king, who does not appear to have been present in the main area of the church, repeating the words which had thrown the bishops into such distress. "At this speech," reports Eadmer, "the King was exceedingly angry and with the help of the Bishops and princes set to work straining every effort to see what rejoinder he could make to combat his words; but found none."

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<sup>296</sup> HN 57-8.



Now that the debate was grounded in Scripture, the other side mined Scripture to find a way out:

And so . . . they broke up into groups and here two, there three, there four, consulted together seeking most anxiously to see whether they could in any way compose some answer to what Anselm had said which would mollify the King's anger and yet at the same time not be directly opposed to the sayings of God which Anselm had quoted.<sup>297</sup>

There were, in fact, several biblical passages that would seem to support a rather large scope for the secular power, such as Peter's words, "Fear God. Honour the king."<sup>298</sup> There were even passages that seemed particular well-aimed at overturning Anselm's defense of dual loyalty. "No servant can serve two masters," Christ had said, "for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other." This would have been perfect for Anselm's opponents if not for the conclusion which followed: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."<sup>299</sup> That would tend to refute the bishops' own argument, especially given Rufus' blatant misuse of the church to increase revenue. For every passage the bishops could employ, there were ten more put into general circulation by Gregorian polemicists, such as the words of the apostles, "We ought to obey God rather than men."<sup>300</sup> There was a deeper problem here than simply an attempt to find scriptural justification, for even if the bishops were successful, their victory itself would implicate the Norman customs.

Anselm had cleverly put the question under debate in a much more general form, so that it was no longer a question of Urban and Rufus, but of spiritual and secular

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<sup>297</sup> HN 58.

<sup>298</sup> 1 Peter 2:17.

<sup>299</sup> Luke 16:13.

<sup>300</sup> Acts 5:29. See Ep. 248 for Anselm's employment of these words in a Gregorian context.

authority. He was not denying that one's secular and spiritual obligations *could* conflict; if anything, the stormy experience of his archiepiscopate thus far had often brought that possibility before him, as his lengthy report to Archbishop Hugh establishes.<sup>301</sup> Anselm was, rather, asking the bishops to show that secular and spiritual obligations were *inherently* in conflict. This was a question with far-reaching consequences. If the bishops were to succeed in arguing that there was an inherent conflict between the secular and the spiritual, they would thereby undermine their own office, for how could bishops then be vassals of the king and make feudal oaths to him, or how could chancellors and administrators be rewarded with sacramental office? Anselm was not advocating Gregorian ideas, but he was forcing his opponents into a position where, if he were wrong, they would be advocating as much. Again, this would essentially be the position Paschal II would take fifteen years later, proposing that the Church give up much of its land in return for autonomy, and it was hardly one the Anglo-Norman bishops wanted to take.

Notwithstanding the fact that Anselm was more astute than his opponents, his subordinate bishops were far from being intellectually incompetent. Several of them were scholars in their own right, and most were sharp-witted men who had been successful in the corridors of power.<sup>302</sup> They were capable of coming up with very good reasons how a dual loyalty could be contradictory, but that is not how Anselm had framed the question; he had asked them to show an inherent conflict, and they could not do so

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<sup>301</sup> Ep. 176.

<sup>302</sup> Cantor, 34-8.

without drawing into question the entire Anglo-Norman ecclesiastical establishment.

Anselm had put the bishops in an extremely uncomfortable position, as Cantor notes:

Never before in their lives did Anselm's episcopal colleagues have to make the agonizing choice between king and pope which the Archbishop now placed before them. Those of the bishops who, in conformity with Rufus' demands, renounced their allegiance and submission to their Primate unconditionally, the King treated as his faithful friends and liegemen, the desired status of a baron. But those who finally acknowledged the validity of Anselm's resort to the supreme authority of the Roman pope—apparently only Gundulf of Rochester and Ralph Luffa of Chichester—the King branded as traitors and enemies of his will. In this novel dilemma, it is no wonder that the bishops remained confused and terror-stricken.<sup>303</sup>

All throughout the bishops' fruitless brainstorming, Eadmer reports, "Anselm sat by himself, putting his trust solely in the innocency [*sic*] of his heart and the mercy of the Lord God. Then, as his adversaries carried on their little conclaves for quite a long time, he leaned back against the wall and slept peacefully."<sup>304</sup> The archbishop was not retiring from the fray, smug in his victory; it is far more likely that he was earnestly meditating on the subject at hand, only seeming aloof. In the *Vita*, Eadmer makes it clear that Anselm often employed such a *modus operandi* at Bec, when, as abbot, he had been involved in judicial disputes:

When he was in a crowd of litigants and his opponents were laying their heads together, discussing the crafts and wiles by which they could help their own case and fraudulently injure his, he would have nothing to do with such thing; instead, he would discourse to those who would listen about the Gospels or some other part of the Bible, or at least about some subject tending to edification. And often, if there was no-one to listen to such talk, he would compose himself, in the sweet quietness of a pure heart, to sleep.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>304</sup> HN 58.

<sup>305</sup> VA 46.

This supposed sleep, however, was actually a highly alert state of mental concentration:

Then sometimes, when the frauds which had been prepared with intricate subtlety were brought to his notice, he would immediately detect and disentangle them, not like a man who had just been sleeping, but like one who had been wide-awake, keeping a sharp watch.<sup>306</sup>

By such means could Anselm see “things at a glance as they appeared in the light of truth.”<sup>307</sup> His behavior helps one understand how the Anglo-Norman bishops had misjudged Anselm. “His election was especially acceptable to them,” Cantor writes, “because they did not expect him to interest himself in those affairs of this world in which most of them readily participated. They anticipated that Anselm would pray to God for them and that they would take charge of his secular business.”<sup>308</sup> Anselm’s own “Meditation on Human Redemption,” intended as a companion piece to *Cur Deus Homo*, suggests the inner strength of humility:

But what strength is there in such weakness, what height in such lowliness? What is there to be venerated in such abjection? Surely something is hidden by this weakness, something is concealed by this humility. There is something mysterious in this abjection. O hidden strength: a man hangs on a cross and lifts the load of eternal death from the human race; a man nailed to wood looses the bonds of everlasting death that hold fast the world.<sup>309</sup>

This is a long ways from insinuating that Anselm used guile and deception, manipulating religious *topoi* in order to get his way, as Vaughn maintains.<sup>310</sup> Such a view requires more than going beyond the evidence; it amounts to a presumption of

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Cantor, 58.

<sup>309</sup> Anselm, *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm, With the Proslogion*, trans. Benedicta Ward (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 230.

<sup>310</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 12, 129-130, 167; “Anselm: Saint and Statesman,” 209.

hypocrisy, in which every act and word issuing from Anselm must have a double meaning, decipherable, of course, only to the deconstructionist historian. A more plausible reconciliation of Anselm's stated dislike of secular matters with his occasional skill in dealing with his opponents as archbishop is that he employed the same mental dexterity honed by theological reflection in order to deal with the demands of his new office. The proceedings of the Council of Rockingham amply bear this out. As Southern argues,

Strangely enough, it was the faintness of his personal desires which made him formidable. Rufus would have understood either violence or guile, but Anselm fought like a somnambulist whose blows were difficult to counter because they were impossible to predict. He slept while others argued, and when they presented their demands, the unexpectedness of his answer caused consternation.<sup>311</sup>

William Rufus, however, had something besides theology at his disposal—coercion. When the bishops returned from the king, they demanded Anselm state his position on the issue as it had stood at Gillingham, when Rufus returned from Normandy, accusing him of robbing Rufus “of his crown and the jewel of his sovereignty.”<sup>312</sup> Returning to the more solid ground of the *usus atque leges*, they declared, “Whoever takes from him the prerogatives of his royal majesty takes at once his crown and kingdom.”<sup>313</sup> In invading the sphere of royal prerogative, they hinted, Anselm risked treason. Mixing threats with cajoling, the bishops employed the time-honored justification for preferring temporal power to things spiritual:

If the King be reconciled to you, Urban can do you no harm, abjure obedience to him, shake off the yoke of subjection and a free man, as becomes an

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<sup>311</sup> Southern, *Saint Anselm*, 155.

<sup>312</sup> HN 58.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

Archbishop of Canterbury, in all your actions have regard solely to the will of your lord the King and to his bidding. Where you have done otherwise, acknowledge your fault and, to secure his pardon, whatever he asks of you as amends fall in with his wishes like a wise man; so shall your enemies, who now exult in your misfortunes, see you restored to honour and be put to shame. . . . That we say, and say again, is the one hope for you and yours.<sup>314</sup>

In the final analysis, the power of the king was tangible, that of the pope, ephemeral. It would be wrong, however, to put an overly cynical gloss on the bishops' argument. The bishops owed their standing in the English church not to the pope, but to the king; he it was who had promoted them in the royal chancery and rewarded them with bishoprics; to him they owed fealty as land-holding vassals. It was not as if the bishops had one day been faced with the question of whether to take a spiritual road or a secular one and, lacking the fortitude to choose the right path, they chose the latter instead. This was the system in which they had risen, and they knew no other. It was far more realistic to embrace a system in which the spiritual mission of the church was bounded by the king's will, perhaps even strengthened by it, than to oppose one's sovereign on the basis of a theoretical obedience to distant Rome. This was the force of inertia resisting the Gregorian Reform, not only in England but all over Europe, and it would be difficult to overstate its strength.

So powerful was the bishops' use of coaxing and thinly veiled threats that Anselm asked for an adjournment so that he might spend the night thinking about what his response would be. "What you say, I hear," he said, "but, to deal only with this one point, to abjure obedience to the Pope, that I utterly refuse to do."<sup>315</sup> In his request for more time to think Anselm's opponents sensed weakness:

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<sup>314</sup> HN 58-9.

<sup>315</sup> HN 59.

Then the Bishops and princes, supposing that Anselm was either at a loss to know what he should say further or else thoroughly frightened and on the point of abandoning the course which he had so far taken, returned to the King and persuaded him not on any account to grant an adjournment but that, as the matter had been debated at the recent inquiry, if Anselm now refused to abide by their advice, the king should bid final judgment to be at once passed upon him.<sup>316</sup>

To such a course of action Rufus readily agreed. The bishops returned and once again laid the king's grievance before the archbishop, accusing Anselm of robbing the king of his sovereignty in "making Odo [who took the name Urban], Bishop of Ostia, Pope in this realm of England."<sup>317</sup> Either Anselm would give them his answer or he would "most certainly receive, and that now at once, the sentence which [his] presumption calls for."<sup>318</sup> It was at this moment in the three days of the council that Anselm stood in the greatest danger; as Barlow puts it, "What had started as a conference had turned into a trial."<sup>319</sup> There was to be no adjournment, no time for reflection, nothing but Anselm's reply to the royal ultimatum. Anselm, however, obstinately returned to his strategy of both generalizing the question, so that it was a matter of the secular and the spiritual rather than the *usus atque leges*, and re-stating it so the burden of proof was on his opponents, only this time his reply was not couched in biblical reference but was explicit:

Whoever would prove me false to the oath and allegiance which I owe to my earthly king because I refuse to abjure obedience to the venerable Arch-pontiff of the holy Roman Church, let him come and he shall find me ready in the name of the Lord to answer him as it is right and where it is right that I should do so.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> HN 60.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Barlow, 340.

<sup>320</sup> HN 61.

The bishops, according to Eadmer, had no way of replying to this:

From that moment they understood, what till then they had not had in mind nor thought that Anselm himself could have in mind, namely, that an Archbishop of Canterbury could not be judged or condemned by any human being except only by the Pope nor on any charge whatever be compelled by anyone to make answer to any man except the Pope, unless he chose to do so.<sup>321</sup>

Here, it would seem, Eadmer got ahead of himself somewhat in attributing such a Gregorian epiphany to the bishops. Cantor understandably seizes on this pronouncement as proof that Anselm “fell back on a canon law principle much favored by the Gregorian reformers in their attempts to establish the effective universal jurisdiction of the papacy over the church,” tracing this concept to the *Dictatus Papae* of Gregory VII and a similar privilege granted to the Archbishop of Rheims.<sup>322</sup> This view would require demonstrating, however, that Anselm was familiar with the papal pronouncements and canon law, and Cantor’s efforts to do so are conjectural. Southern remains much more skeptical of this possibility:

[Anselm’s] knowledge of papal decisions and the development of papal policy could scarcely have been more meager. . . . Even the decrees of the Council of Clermont in 1095, to which he sent an envoy, remained unknown to him and were unheeded in practice for several years. To a modern mind trained to expect decisions to be made and to be effectively communicated to those whom they concern, such a lack of business-like habits is almost incredible. But in this case it must be attributed not only to Anselm’s personal indifference to business, but to the unsystematic habits of the most advanced chancery in Europe, which had no regular means of communicating decisions to those who were most affected by them.<sup>323</sup>

The *Historia* itself argues against Cantor’s conclusion, for while Cantor presents the supposedly Gregorian statement as coming from Anselm, beginning the quote in mid-

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Cantor, 83, 85.

<sup>323</sup> Southern, *Anselm*, 123-4.



sentence in order to do so—"The Archbishop of Canterbury can neither be judged nor condemned by any man except the Pope alone. . . ."—Eadmer does not put these words in Anselm's mouth. As the passage quoted above indicates, this statement was Eadmer's comment on what Anselm must have "had in mind."<sup>324</sup> Cantor gets quite a bit of mileage by presuming the statement to be Anselm's, but there is no reason to do so.

Southern offers a slightly different interpretation of this passage, relying not on Anselm's knowledge of canon law but on the well-known background of his accuser, Bishop William of Durham. Seven years earlier, the bishop had sided with a rebellion against Rufus, then only recently made king; during his trial, his unsuccessful defense relied in part on "an appeal to the pope as the one competent tribunal for the judgment of a bishop."<sup>325</sup> Later reconciled with the king, Bishop William had gone far enough to be Rufus' spokesman at Rockingham. Surely he could see Anselm's "simple point, which had formed the basis of his own earlier defence, that no tribunal except that of the pope could pass judgment on the archbishop."<sup>326</sup> Vaughn, also, subscribes to Southern's interpretation.<sup>327</sup>

It is quite probable that Anselm was aware of the rebellion of 1088 and Bishop Williams' part in it, and it is possible that he was turning the prelate's own defense against him. Anselm's declaration that he would answer any accusation "as it is right and *where* it is right that I should do so"<sup>328</sup> would, in this interpretation, refer to the idea that

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<sup>324</sup> HN 61.

<sup>325</sup> Southern, *Anselm*, 148.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>327</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 183.

<sup>328</sup> HN 61, italics mine.

only the pope could rightly judge a bishop, but this gives rise to two problems. First, Eadmer states that the intention was to affirm the immunity of “an Archbishop of Canterbury,” not just any bishop, and though this may seem like hairsplitting, the difference is crucial. In its emphasis on the primacy of Canterbury and the archbishop’s immunity from “any human being” except the pope (which would presumably exclude papal legates, as well), this sentiment seems to have more in common with the second half of Anselm’s archiepiscopate than the first. In 1102, Pope Pascal II formally granted Anselm that status, writing to him: “To you personally we grant this additional privilege: that, as long as your worship is preserved by divine mercy for that kingdom you are to be subject to our judgement alone and never to that of any legate.”<sup>329</sup> This would seem to suggest that Eadmer was telescoping things when he construed this to be the meaning of Anselm’s words. Secondly, *Dictatus Papae* or no, if such a defense had not worked in 1088, there would be little reason to hope it would again, under the same intransigent king.

It would appear, rather, that Eadmer’s statement about the Archbishop of Canterbury stands in no clear relationship to the words that he actually attributes to Anselm, and it seems incredible that the bishops could have derived such a conclusion from Anselm’s words, especially when Anselm was merely repeating his basic argument. The Council of Rockingham had been convened to decide if Anselm’s allegiance to Urban contradicted his allegiance to William Rufus, and Anselm was determined to keep the burden of proof on his opponents. It is far more likely that this was the point of deadlock in the council than the scene of Anselm’s unfurling of the Gregorian banner. The bishops had repeatedly accused Anselm of being a disloyal subject, and Anselm had

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<sup>329</sup> Ep. 222.

obstinately maintained that he was not. The idea of deadlock is supported by the events which followed, in which the crowd began to whisper impatiently and Rufus rebuked his bishops for not being able to overcome Anselm.<sup>330</sup>

In the final analysis, this strange remark, so out of place, would appear to be an instance of Eadmer importing later ideas into an earlier stage of Anselm's career, as he had done at the beginning of the *Historia*.<sup>331</sup> Southern notes that Eadmer's occasional introduction of ideas into Anselm's conflict with Rufus which did not arise until Henry's reign "gave coherence and dignity to his story, and made it intelligible to his readers, at the small expense of a little distortion."<sup>332</sup> If this was distortion, then it was a somewhat forgivable one: to Eadmer's credit, he did not place this remark in Anselm's mouth or anyone else's, and so Cantor's attribution of it to Anselm, and his subsequent hypotheses, are not warranted.

Eadmer's narrative reveals Anselm employing the methods that mark his theology, above all his masterful use of reasoned argument to demonstrate the logic of what divine authority commands:

But how should I proceed? If I sought to describe one by one all the threats, all the reproaches, the insults, the lying accusations that were hurled at the Master, I fear I should be found tedious. But all this he bore patiently for his loyalty to the Apostolic See and by God's help demolished all opposition by reasoning that could not be refuted, showing that it was he rather than his opponents who stood fast in the truth and that on all the questions to which the real point at issue in the controversy related he had divine authority upon his side.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> HN 61-2.

<sup>331</sup> HN 2.

<sup>332</sup> Southern, *Portrait*, 415.

<sup>333</sup> HN 61-2.

If ever there was a passage of Eadmer's chronicle revealing how Anselm's background in theology could be put to a political use, it is this one. One could argue, of course, that Anselm's deftness of argument is beside the point; his vow of obedience to Urban had decided his course of action before the council ever began. That argument, however, does not do justice to Anselm's efforts to avoid a schism, a rupturing of his dual allegiance. At the outset, Anselm was determined to find a way to reconcile the two demands on his loyalty. Through the course of the proceedings, however, Anselm came to believe that to yield in any respect to the *usus atque leges* regarding recognition of the pope would require him to forswear, directly or tacitly, his obedience to Urban, and that he was not willing to do. He could find abstract justification for his position in Scripture, but so could his opponents. As it turned out, it was in the application of Christian doctrine to the specific problems of this situation that Anselm's theological adeptness came to bear. As will be seen later, the political disputes brought into sharp relief at Rockingham would eventually result in an enrichment of his theology through a profound insight.

According to Eadmer, Rufus remonstrated with his bishops toward the end of the second day: "How is this? Did not you promise me that you would deal with him just as I wished, would judge him and condemn him?" The bishops, however, had grossly underestimated Anselm's resistance and his abilities—"At first he spoke to each point one by one so weakly and haltingly that we thought him a simpleton devoid of all human shrewdness." They would be better prepared, however, for the third day: "Now that we

have full knowledge of his line of argument, we will spend the time until morning in thinking out some plan on your behalf.”<sup>334</sup>

### *Day Three*

Despite having the night to think over a new plan of attack, the bishops did not meet with success; as Bishop William of Durham reportedly told the king, Anselm's arguments rested firmly on Scripture and the authority vested in St. Peter.<sup>335</sup> Eadmer asserts that it was Bishop William who led the episcopate in its attack on Anselm, for he was the one who had the most to gain in a schism between king and archbishop. He even goes so far as to say that the Bishop William was the “originator and a keen instigator of this dispute”,<sup>336</sup> which sounds strange at first, since it was Anselm's need to seek his pallium from the pope which precipitated his conflict with the king. Surely the conflict was inevitable, given Anselm's obedience to Urban and Rufus' unwillingness to immediately decide which pope to recognize. It is possible, however, that Bishop William instigated the conflict in the sense that he sought to constantly remind the king that the Norman *usus atque leges* were in danger from the archbishop's action:

For the King had, as is well known, the idea that he did not possess his royal dignity intact so long as anyone anywhere throughout his whole land was said to have any possession or any power which was not derived from the King himself, even if it were ascribed to the Will of God. Durham, knowing that wish of the King's, exerted all his ingenuity to see whether he could not in some way turn Anselm out of the kingdom, worn out by the false accusation levelled against him, reckoning (so it was said) that, if Anselm departed, he himself would be promoted to the archbishopric.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> HN 62.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> HN 59.

<sup>337</sup> HN 60.

To Bishop William and his king, then, there were two possible outcomes to confronting Anselm, both favorable: “either Anselm would abjure obedience to the Pope and remain discredited in his realm, or, if he held fast to that allegiance, would quite properly be banished from his kingdom.”<sup>338</sup> The latter would be a more clear-cut victory for Rufus, enabling him to resume direct control of the archiepiscopate.<sup>339</sup> After two days, it was clear that Anselm would not give in on the question of obedience to Urban, so only the second course of action remained. However, both king and bishop were well aware by this point that Anselm would refuse to answer point-blank questions to their satisfaction—he was certainly intransigent in his obedience to Urban, but he would not say anything overtly treasonous. Two days had amply demonstrated that the archbishop could not be maneuvered into forswearing his allegiance to the king. The bishops, the nobles, and the king had had enough of the verbal sparring, as voiced by one Robert, most likely the Count of Meulan:

While we busy ourselves all day long preparing such advice and in doing so scheme how to make the answers we suggest into some sort of consistent argument, he on his side so far from thinking out any evil just goes to sleep and then, when these arguments of ours are brought out in his presence, straight away with one breath of his lips he shatters them like cobwebs.<sup>340</sup>

If the archbishop’s hand could not be forced, Bishop William recommended, “then the staff and ring must be taken from him and he be driven from the kingdom.”<sup>341</sup> Eadmer reports that Rufus agreed, but the nobles balked. This is Eadmer’s first mention of the nobles making any contribution to the proceedings; he does not elaborate here, but

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<sup>338</sup> HN 59-60.

<sup>339</sup> HN 60.

<sup>340</sup> HN 62-3.

<sup>341</sup> HN 62.

it is clear that Anselm had some degree of support among sections of the nobility.

Anselm "was defending a matter of principle which they could understand," Barlow writes; "he was not in any ordinary sense a traitor; he was being subjected to a good deal of bullying pressure; and his behaviour was quiet and dignified."<sup>342</sup> Cantor offers a more material explanation of the nobles' stance:

[The nobles] must have sympathised with Anselm's resistance to the demands of the royal administration. The lay magnates looked with apprehension on the financial measures of the royal government. They did not want to remove an archbishop who shared their hatred of the royal tax-gatherers. The lay magnates at Rockingham were the pioneers of a favorite baronial policy of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, that of attempting to rebuff the advancing power of the royal administration by discomfiting the king in ecclesiastical affairs. Furthermore, the tenants of Canterbury among the magnates feared the effect of another prolonged vacancy which might follow Anselm's expulsion from his see.<sup>343</sup>

Whether this was wholly sincere, as Eadmer seems to suggest, or partly an attempt to gain leverage against the king, the nobles' opposition was evidently strong enough to rule out exile at this point. Eadmer certainly believed that the nobles were able, if not to prevent outright, then at least to passively resist the king's plans, for he describes Rufus "stifling his anger . . . taking care not openly to oppose their contention lest they should be too greatly offended."<sup>344</sup>

Vaughn's interpretation of this passage raises serious questions about Anselm's character, so it deserves some attention. She argues that "Rufus was negotiating from a position of relative weakness because of military reverses [in Normandy and Wales] and the stirrings of baronial rebellion."<sup>345</sup> She draws a connection between the timing of

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<sup>342</sup> Barlow, 341.

<sup>343</sup> Cantor, 86.

<sup>344</sup> HN 64.

<sup>345</sup> Vaughn, *Anselm*, 178.

Rockingham and the impending rebellion of Robert Mowbray, Earl of Northumbria, who refused to come to the king's upcoming Easter court.<sup>346</sup> "Anselm seems to have known about the rebellion afoot. For at just the time when Rufus needed all the support he could get, Anselm, after having held his office for two years, chose to request permission from Rufus to go to Rome for his pallium."<sup>347</sup> If Vaughn's assertion is correct, it would seem to indict Anselm, supporting her contention that Anselm "repeatedly calculated his efforts toward reform to coincide with moments of political crisis when the king needed his support."<sup>348</sup>

There are, however, numerous holes in Vaughn's theory. That Anselm held his office for two years is factually incorrect, and it is quite misleading, possibly prompting the unwary to conclude that Anselm manipulated the pallium issue once the king was ripe for an attack. Eadmer, who is Vaughn's source on this matter as well as everyone else's, states that Anselm raised the issue with Rufus when the latter returned from Normandy, in January of 1095,<sup>349</sup> and Anselm mentions the matter in a letter of the same month.<sup>350</sup> Since Anselm had been consecrated in December 1093,<sup>351</sup> he had held the office of archbishop for one year and one month, not two years. Since the one year required for him to receive his pallium had just expired, this is precisely the point at which one would expect Anselm to become concerned, and his letter to Archbishop Hugh of that month

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<sup>346</sup> Vaughn, "Politician," 288-9.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>349</sup> HN 39.

<sup>350</sup> Ep. 176.

<sup>351</sup> Ep. 164.



expresses this concern: "If I as metropolitan bishop, *having been consecrated*, neither ask to see the Pope in person nor for the pallium whenever I can throughout the whole first year, then rightly I should be removed from that honor. If I am unable to do this without the loss of my archbishopric, it is better for me that it should be violently taken from me."<sup>352</sup> Anselm clearly felt he had no choice: he must either receive his pallium or be removed from office. If it sounds as if he would rather not be archbishop, that is no mistake, and it presents quite a contrast with Vaughn's Anselm, possibly "the most astute politician in the Anglo-Norman kingdom."<sup>353</sup> Anselm's words to his friend support Southern's contention, that "Anselm's most persistent and powerful impulse during these years was to find a way of laying down the archbishopric."<sup>354</sup>

To accuse Anselm, moreover, of timing his request with a moment of crisis when his king need him is absurd, since later that year, when Rufus was suppressing that same rebellion, he entrusted Anselm with the defense of the southern coast, in case Duke Robert should invade from Normandy while the king was in Northumbria.<sup>355</sup> This charge is all the more unjustified since Anselm, when he was thus entrusted with coastal defense, actually put off meeting with the papal legate, Cardinal Walter, who had arrived in the country to discuss reform measures. Anselm's letter to the legate demonstrates that his

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid.; the italics here are mine, in order to stress that this period began from the point of his consecration, not from the point at which he was invested with the staff, in March 1093. Barlow states that "it is doubtful whether an archbishop could exercise metropolitan authority without a pallium," although he adds, "but the archbishops only stressed their relationship with the pope as a last resort when under attack by other powers"; Barlow, 37.

<sup>353</sup> Vaughn, "Politician," 300.

<sup>354</sup> Southern, *Anselm*, 151.

<sup>355</sup> Epp. 191, 192.

attitude toward the king, even after all the conflicts between them, was truly magnanimous and speaks volumes for his keen sense of responsibility:

Your prudence is not unaware of the fact that the two of us can achieve nothing unless what we decide be raised before the King, so that with his agreement and help it may be put into operation. There is another thing [arguing against a meeting], namely, that I dare not move from Canterbury at all because we are daily expecting enemies from across the sea to invade England through those ports which are close to Canterbury. For this reason, my lord the King himself commanded me . . . to guard Canterbury and always to be prepared, so that at whatever hour I receive a message from those guarding the coast for that purpose, I should command the knights and foot-soldiers to be summoned from all quarters and to hasten to resist the violent attacks of the enemy. . . . Therefore I beseech the discretion of your Holiness to act patiently. . . . Your Reverence should know for sure that I am of the same opinion as yourself, that what is to be corrected should be corrected. But I await the return of my lord the King, and the bishops and princes who are with him, so that at a favorable moment and in a reasonable fashion we may suggest to him what has to be done and thus, with the help of God and his agreement and help, we may more effectively carry out what we wish for.<sup>356</sup>

If there was ever “a moment of political crisis when the king needed his support,” this was it, and yet one finds Anselm steadfastly commanding the coastal defense of England for his sovereign. The Council of Rockingham, in contrast, occurred when there was scarcely a hint of such a rebellion, a month before the Easter court at which Earl Robert would fail to appear. Vaughn’s accusation depends on Anselm having knowledge of the crisis months before its occurrence, and yet the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a contemporaneous account, states that the crisis began at Easter, when Earl Robert did not arrive at court, not in January, when Anselm made his request.<sup>357</sup> Most revealingly, it is not that Vaughn concludes Anselm made his request when he did because he knew about an impending rebellion, for there is no evidence that he had any such knowledge; on the contrary, she concluded that “Anselm seems to have known about the rebellion afoot”

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<sup>356</sup> Ep. 191.

<sup>357</sup> ASC 1095.

because he made his request at the moment Vaughn judged to be the most opportune, which was also incorrect.<sup>358</sup> What Vaughn's assertion comes down to is that Anselm must have known because he must have been the type of person Vaughn deems him to be.

If Rufus was not in a position to unilaterally exile Anselm, then he could certainly encourage the bishops to hamstring any of Anselm's efforts to carry out his office. Accordingly, he ordered the bishops to sever relations with the primate, refusing his orders as a group, while the king himself, no longer regarding Anselm as archbishop, would deprive him of the right to protection within the kingdom.<sup>359</sup> Rufus hoped that Anselm's situation would become so unpleasant and unproductive that he would either resign or comply with the king's wishes. It was when Rufus asked the nobles to do likewise that Eadmer presents a glimpse of their opposing argument:

We were never his men and cannot renounce an allegiance which we have never given him. He is our Archbishop; it is for him to be the pilot of the Christian Church in this land; and we, who are Christians, cannot, whilst we live here, refuse to recognize his authority, the more so that there is trace of any fault found in him which should make us treat him otherwise.<sup>360</sup>

One cannot help but notice that the nobles in Eadmer's account come off much better than the episcopate. The bishops speak in the frank language of brute force; the nobles speak as devout Christians, respectful of virtue when they see it. "Indeed had you been by," Eadmer assures the reader, "you would have heard now one and now another with an outburst of indignation dub this bishop or that by some nickname as Judas the

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<sup>358</sup> Vaughn, "Politician," 289.

<sup>359</sup> HN 63.

<sup>360</sup> HN 64.

traitor, Pilate or Herod and the like.”<sup>361</sup> It is easy enough to dismiss this as propaganda on Eadmer’s part, but the underlying truth it points to is also clear: the Anglo-Norman bishops were in a much more craven position with regard to the king than the more powerful nobles, for most of the bishops owed the success of their careers, in large part, to the king’s favor. The land they held, they held from the king as a benefice appropriate to their office. Although some of them had children or nephews climbing the ecclesiastical ladder, the fact remained that the bishops’ land was not theirs to pass down or to dispense but the king’s. Even if a few of the bishops had qualms about Rufus’ methods, they were not in a position to oppose the very source of their power. Added to this were the rather cold relations between Anselm and his suffragan bishops in the first year of his archiepiscopate, the ambition of men such as Bishop William, and the desire to maintain the status quo rather than to support what many saw as Anselm’s reckless attitude toward the king. Thus, it should hardly be surprising that the bishops complied with Rufus’ strategy of severing relations with their superior, but while no one was willing to directly disobey the king’s orders, there were bishops who carried them out less than vigorously.

In the *Vita*, Eadmer reports that only Bishop Gundulf of Rochester refused categorically to renounce submission and obedience to Anselm; Bishop Wulfstan had died shortly before the council.<sup>362</sup> Some of the bishops intended to refuse obedience to Anselm only in those powers he claimed by the authority of the contested pope, leaving a theoretically substantial area for obeying their primate in other matters. These bishops clearly had misgivings about Rufus’ policy, choosing to obey the letter of his command

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<sup>361</sup> HN 64-5.

<sup>362</sup> VA 86.

rather than its spirit, while the others fully intended to disregard every command given by Anselm. Rufus quickly ferreted out this divergence in the interpretation of his orders, threatening the half-way bishops with all the force of his displeasure until they, as with so many around the king, regained his favor through a bribe.<sup>363</sup> For Anselm, the betrayal of the bishops was not a cause for acrimony but of sorrow. "By my sins it has come about," he wrote that spring to the bishops of Ireland, "that those who freely subjected themselves to our authority now freely repudiate our authority. I who appeared lovable to them am now almost hated by everyone."<sup>364</sup>

Rufus had expected Anselm, now deprived of any real authority or even a right to protection, to resign his office, thereby enabling the king to appoint a more compliant primate, probably after a few years of keeping the office vacant in order to accumulate much-needed revenue for his military campaigns. Rather than abdicate, however, Anselm declared his intention to leave the kingdom—still in possession of his office—and asked for safe conduct for himself and his companions. Since he could not carry out his office, he would hold it in exile "until God should see fit to put an end to the distressful state which then prevailed" in the kingdom.<sup>365</sup> If he did so, Eadmer asserts, the royal intention would have been foiled:

When the King heard this he was greatly troubled and his heart failed him. Although he desired nothing so much as Anselm's departure, yet he would not have him depart still seised of the archbishopric of Canterbury lest the last scandal that might arise therefrom should prove worse than the first; and yet he saw it was impossible to divest him of the archbishopric.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> HN 65.

<sup>364</sup> Ep. 198.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

It was at this moment, when the king's strategy had completely unraveled, that he abandoned the advice of the bishops and took counsel with the more moderate views of the nobility, who urged him to wait until morning for a decision. The nobles understood that Anselm had no qualms in leaving the country, and, of course, such a defeat for the archbishop could well turn out to be a moral and political victory. For his part, Anselm "was filled with joy and gladness, hoping that by crossing the sea he would escape, as was ever his heart's desire, the troubles and burdens of the world."<sup>367</sup>

### *Coda*<sup>368</sup>

The next morning, the nobles announced that there would be a truce until Pentecost, three months later, in order to prevent a schism between the king and the archbishop. The truce did not prevent Rufus from exercising his wrath, banishing Anselm's assistant, Baldwin, along with other clerics.<sup>369</sup> Rufus secretly sent to Rome for the pallium, although Eadmer states that the king did so in the hope that in return for recognition, Urban would permit him to replace Anselm and would confirm the king's special prerogatives, a story confirmed by Hugh of Flavigny, who was in a later papal legation. The papal legate who arrived in England, Bishop Walter of Albano, led the king on, but once Rufus recognized Urban, Walter did not comply with the king's

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<sup>367</sup> HN 66.

<sup>368</sup> Vaughn contends that the council lasted four days (*Anselm*, 177, n. 138), not three as Southern maintains (VA 85, n. 4). For Cantor, it was four days (79); for Barlow, three (339). Eadmer himself, however, in the *Vita* (VA 86-7) stated that the council lasted three days (*Tres dies in isto negotio. . . expensi sunt*), and it would be difficult to dispute him on this point, especially given his phenomenal memory and attention to detail. As Southern notes, "Only two errors in date have been detected in a work [the *Historia*] which abounds in exact references to dates of obscure events." Both errors merely involved the conversion of dates from the religious to the secular calendar; Southern, *Saint Anselm*, 300. Vaughn regards Wednesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, as the fourth day (*Anselm*, 185), but to Eadmer this was merely the day on which the king would give "the final verdict" on Anselm's decision to leave the country (HN 66).

<sup>369</sup> VA 87; HN 66-7.

wishes.<sup>370</sup> Anselm seems to have been caught by surprise when he discovered the pallium was already in England. Although the bishops tried to convince Anselm to give Rufus a bribe to receive the pallium, or at least a sum of money equal to the cost of a trip to Rome (which was now no longer necessary), Anselm refused to budge and won out. Although some of the king's advisors urged Rufus to bestow the pallium himself, he consented to Walter of Albano laying the pallium on the altar at Canterbury, from which Anselm took it on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May, "as though from the hand of St. Peter."<sup>371</sup>

### *Rockingham: The Balance Sheet*

The Council of Rockingham ended not with a solution to a perplexing problem but with a postponement and an evasive resolution. It is tempting to regard the council as without strategic import, other than that the main political players revealed their hands. Southern maintains that the entire council was "largely a matter of shadow-boxing," since Rufus could not have seriously considered recognizing Clement III as pope anyway. Given the king's "unwavering determination to bring Normandy under his rule . . . it would have been a very unnecessary aggravation of his difficulties to have two different mutually excommunicated popes in lands which he intended to unite once more." He concludes that "to drive the archbishop into exile for having recognized a pope accepted by all Normandy would have been an act of political folly."<sup>372</sup> Surely it would have been, although William Rufus was not exempt from folly.

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<sup>370</sup> HN 68-9; Barlow, 342-3.

<sup>371</sup> HN 70-2; VA 87; Ep. 192; ASC 1095.

<sup>372</sup> Southern, *Anselm*, 154; *idem*, *Portrait*, 269.

The king, however, was not entertaining Anselm's exile because the primate had recognized Urban; the king's opposition centered on Anselm's usurpation of royal prerogative, which threatened to abrogate the *usus atque leges*. This problem, exacerbated by the concerns of both sides that a precedent would be set, eclipsed the issue of which pope to recognize. Were Rufus to give in, a significant Norman custom would thereby be abandoned, giving de facto power of deciding between rival popes to future ecclesiastics, not his own royal successors. The Anglo-Norman kings were very conscious of the power of precedent and zealously guarded their customs, expanding them whenever possible. There is every reason to believe, therefore, that Rufus would engage in what might seem to be folly if he thought it the only way to preserve his rights. That, in the end, is exactly what he did. If Anselm's exile did not begin immediately after Rockingham, it was because Rufus still thought he could drive Anselm to resign. If it was an act of folly to exile Anselm over his recognition of the pope in 1095, surely it was folly to exile him for attempting to seek advice from the pope in 1097.

Anselm's statements at Rockingham display his willingness to agree to any compromise solution that did not require him to forsake his obedience to Urban, but his obedience to the pope led him in an increasingly radical direction, causing him to question the very customs he had once accepted as a given. The Council of Rockingham thus represents a political coming of age for Anselm, forcing him to think about questions of ultimate obedience. Anselm had successfully reversed his opponents' arguments, putting them on the defensive, but he had not offered a coherent rationale for his course of action. He abided by his obedience to the pope, but he had not hit upon a justification anywhere near as solid as the Norman customs which stood in opposition; in the end,



there was only his stubbornness. Anselm still hoped to reach an amicable compromise with Rufus, but the next two years would demonstrate that the lines had already been drawn. Rockingham may have been a skirmish, permitting each side to test the defenses of the other, but it was not shadow-boxing.

The effects of Rockingham on Anselm would not be discernable for two and half years, but when the archbishop did take the offensive, his approach to the question of Caesar and Christ exhibit a rigor of argument and a logical persuasiveness far above his performance at Rockingham. In the same period in which he continued work on *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm had evidently thought about obedience a great deal. At this point, the evolution of his theological ideas cannot be separated from his experiences as archbishop, and the next chapter will attempt to synthesize them.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## OBEDIENCE IN ANSELM'S THOUGHT AND ACTIONS

*Anselm Takes the Offensive*

Eadmer does not provide much information on the two years after Rockingham. Anselm's letters indicate that he guarded the southern coast in the summer of 1095 while Rufus suppressed the incipient revolt in Northumbria,<sup>373</sup> and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records a fruitless campaign against the Welsh later that year.<sup>374</sup> Anselm was still unable to convene an ecclesiastical council that would lay the basis for the reform of the English church, to include combating simony and clerical marriage. In a letter to Urban, he expressed his frustration:

Holy Father, I grieve to be what I am, I grieve not to be what I was. I grieve that I am a bishop because, with my sins impeding me I do not carry out the office of a bishop. I seemed to accomplish something in a humble place, whereas in a lofty position, weighed down by a great burden, I produce no benefit to myself nor do I succeed in being useful to anybody. . . . I long to escape from the unbearable anxiety, to relinquish the burden, but on the other hand I fear to offend God. Fear of God compelled me to take on this burden and that same fear compels me to hold on to it. If I were able to perceive God's will in these matters, beyond doubt I would devote my will and my actions to it as far as possible. But now since God's will is concealed from me I do not know what to do. . . .<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> Epp. 191, 192.

<sup>374</sup> ASC 1095.

<sup>375</sup> Ep. 193.

Despite the relative quiescence of Anselm's struggles with Rufus during this period, he was thinking about the problems raised at Rockingham; of that there can be no doubt, for when he clashed once more with the king, his statements reveal that his thoughts on the secular power had continued to evolve and were now quite complex. Anselm also continued his theological investigations during this period, including *De Incarnatione Verbi* (On the Incarnation of the Word) and *Cur Deus Homo*.<sup>376</sup> When, in 1097, the king complained about the quality of the troops Anselm had provided for another campaign in Wales, matters quickly came to a head. Rufus demanded reparation, to be decided upon at court, and it seemed as if the king would get a monetary payment, after all. Anselm sensed that Rufus' accusation was a pretext, justifying the postponement of reform measures even though his military campaigns had halted. According to Eadmer, "Anselm reflected that this sort of thing could crop up all the time about nothing, so that he would always be thus occupied and unable to carry out his episcopal duties. So he decided that he must go to Rome and seek advice about these things from the See of St. Peter."<sup>377</sup> In May, the archbishop sought permission to go to Rome, but Rufus refused; Anselm tried three months later but was again refused.<sup>378</sup>

Finally, in October of 1097, at Winchester, Anselm once again requested permission to seek the Urban's advice, and the king once again angrily refused, declaring that if Anselm were to go, he would lose the archiepiscopate.<sup>379</sup> Rufus had more resolve than two years earlier, and he made it clear this time that for Anselm to leave would

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<sup>376</sup> Ep. 207; VA 88, n. 1, 107.

<sup>377</sup> VA 88; HN 77-8.

<sup>378</sup> HN 79-80; VA 88-9, 91; Ep. 210.

<sup>379</sup> Epp. 206 and 210; HN 80.

amount to an abdication of his office. "The King was very angry at this request," Anselm wrote shortly thereafter, "and demanded satisfaction from me. . . . Moreover, he demanded my assurance that I would not in future under any circumstances have recourse to the Pope . . . but if I did intend to do such a thing at any time I should do it at once."<sup>380</sup>

Anselm did not see any other way out of the situation than to leave the country, with or without royal sanction. To remain in England would only be to suffer more harassment from the king, with his office ever more unpleasant and unproductive. "I have now been in this archbishopric for four years," he wrote to Urban, "and have borne no fruit, but have lived uselessly with immense difficulties for my soul so that every day I wish rather to die outside England than to live there."<sup>381</sup> A group of the more moderate bishops and nobles tried to persuade Anselm to back down from his persistent efforts to seek permission to see Urban, one of the bishops reproaching him for "throwing away the dignity and the opportunities for good which the exalted position of Archbishop affords," but Anselm would have none of it: "If he refuses to grant it, then I shall take it upon myself; for it is written 'It is right to obey God rather than man.'"<sup>382</sup>

Finally came Rufus' ultimatum: either Anselm would take an oath never to appeal to the pope or he must leave the kingdom.<sup>383</sup> The king can have had no illusions as to what Anselm's choice would be. It remained for Anselm to make one last defense of his actions before leaving, and in front of the royal court, he answered the accusation that he

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<sup>380</sup> Ep. 206.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> HN 81; VA 92; Acts 5:29.

<sup>383</sup> HN 84; VA 92; Ep. 210.

had violated his promise at the close of Rockingham to uphold the king's customs.<sup>384</sup>

Anselm stated that he had vowed to uphold only those customs which the king "held rightly and according to the will of God."<sup>385</sup> To this Rufus and the nobles objected, asserting that "no mention had been made either of God or of right" in the vow at Rockingham, to which Anselm replied, "God forbid I say, that any Christian should hold or defend customs which are known to be contrary to God and to right."<sup>386</sup>

It is at this point that Anselm emerged with a new approach, the beginnings of a coherent justification for what appeared to be civil disobedience. He had had two and a half years to think over the questions raised at Rockingham, and there was no hesitation as at that council. He stridently defied anyone to demonstrate that he was not maintaining proper allegiance to the king just because he rejected an unjust and irreligious custom.<sup>387</sup> On its surface, this appeared to be nothing more than the demand he had made at Rockingham, but there, it was his allegiance to the pope which he held did not conflict with his allegiance to the king.<sup>388</sup> Now, he was acknowledging the custom, the prerogative, but he would not obey it because it was unjust, and he challenged anyone to prove him treasonous.

And then came Anselm's coup de grace: the fact that he rejected an unjust law did not mean that he had transgressed his allegiance to the king, for "all faith that is plighted

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<sup>384</sup> There is no mention of this pledge in Eadmer's account of Rockingham, but it would presumably have sealed the truce agreement.

<sup>385</sup> HN 84.

<sup>386</sup> HN 84-5. His letter to Urban a few weeks later conveys the same sentiment: "I saw the law of God, the canons, and the Apostolic authorities overrun by arbitrary usages . . . and these arbitrary usages were more highly esteemed than straightforward righteousness. I knew that if I tolerated these things to the end I would establish such evil usages for my successors to the damnation of my soul"; Ep. 206.

<sup>387</sup> HN 85.

<sup>388</sup> HN 61.

formally to any mortal man, whoever he may be, is sanctioned by faith toward God. . . .<sup>389</sup> If the faith pledged to a man conflicts with the faith pledged to God, that mortal allegiance loses its legitimacy, for the oath of fealty itself declares, "Through the faith I owe God, I will be faithful to you."<sup>390</sup> Thus, it was out of the question to swear not to seek the pope, since to forswear the pope is to forswear St. Peter, which is to forswear Christ, who made Peter prince of the Church.<sup>391</sup> Anselm had gone beyond citing Scripture to offer a powerful and persuasive logical argument. Frank Barlow notes the profound effects of Anselm's words:

After Anselm's debates with Rufus, things could never be the same in England. Although Rufus had a case and was not out-debated, Anselm's arguments in support of an autonomous spiritual hierarchy were left to sink in and have their effect. The clergy were the intelligentsia and always responded to shifts in ideas and attitudes prevailing within educated opinion. Anselm had prepared the way for Henry I's defeat [nearly a decade later].<sup>392</sup>

Although Barlow gives perhaps too much credit to Rufus as well as the episcopal "intelligentsia," who in England were decades behind the Gregorian developments, his term "autonomous spiritual hierarchy" is on the mark. Rufus had sensed, in 1095, that Anselm's rather straightforward request to receive his pallium would ultimately result in an invasion of the royal prerogatives, and events proved his supposition correct, albeit not without the aid of his own intransigence in the matter. Any successful attempt to limit the *usus atque leges*, even if only to resolve the predicament of Anselm's prior allegiance to Urban, would set a precedent, and if pursued, would tend to create an alternate source of *usus atque leges* which the king would have to tacitly recognize. Every word in

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<sup>389</sup> HN 85.

<sup>390</sup> Barlow, *The English Church*, 292.

<sup>391</sup> HN 85-7.

<sup>392</sup> Barlow, 292.

Barlow's phrase implies the danger Anselm's course of action presented to William Rufus: this alternate source of authority was *autonomous*, so the king had no control over it; it was *spiritual*, which made it as immediate as the soul and yet beyond the reach of temporal power; and it was a *hierarchy*, a chain of command proceeding from the Vicar of St. Peter to the lowest levels, a structure with greater stability and legitimacy than mere personal opposition. This is what Anselm had arrived at, a force far more formidable than, but ultimately reducible to, a monk's obedience. Anselm's declaration was not a mere political maneuver, for it had deep roots indeed.

### *The Genealogy of an Idea*

Anselm's argument was not a crafting of theology to support a political course of action already decided upon, nor was it an epiphany. The development of the idea can be traced in all of Anselm's works. Three decades earlier, in *De Grammatico*, his earliest work, Anselm had reasoned that a substance is the ultimate ground of its characteristics, such that characteristics cannot exist without substance, whereas there is no characteristic in the absence of which the substance ceases to exist.<sup>393</sup> In the *Monologion* he related this ontology to the notion of a divine being, stating that "all things that exist, exist through some one thing, and hence . . . this thing exists through itself while other things exist through something other than themselves."<sup>394</sup> The implications for justice Anselm worked out in the *Proslogion*, proclaiming to God: "That alone is just which You will,

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<sup>393</sup> "Nulla enim est differentia substantiae sine qua substantia inveniri non posset, et nulla differentiarum eius sine illa potest existere"; *De Grammatico* 12; Schmitt 1: 156; p. 138 (4.231).

<sup>394</sup> *Monologion* 13; Schmitt 1:27; pp. 25-6.

and that is not just which You do not will.”<sup>395</sup> In *De Veritate*, Anselm ascribed justice to the will, not in understanding or in action, since a person might will a seemingly just act for the sake of personal gain or because he is forced. “Therefore justice is rectitude of will preserved for its own sake,” he concluded.<sup>396</sup> Anselm reasoned that there are not many truths and justices, but one truth and one justice, of which all upright wills partake; this “highest truth subsists in itself.”<sup>397</sup> Later, in *Libertate Arbitrii*, he drew the natural conclusion: the individual’s rectitude of will is nothing other than willing what God wants one to will.<sup>398</sup>

Finally, in *De Incarnatione Verbi*, completed while he was still in England,<sup>399</sup> Anselm concluded that “the will of an angel or a human being that is contrary to God is its own.”<sup>400</sup> Even in the case of those who subject their will to that of another—as, for instance, in an oath of allegiance—their will is still their own if what they do is against God, for through this subjection, they are only trying to attain what they want. In a letter written to the monks of Bec shortly after his appointment as archbishop, Anselm touches upon the same idea:

True obedience indeed is either to God or to the Church of God and, after God, above all to [religious] superiors [*praelatis*]. When I said “in the name of the Lord” I did not forswear or refuse this obedience but rather preserved it. Learn, therefore, what I then gave you. It was this: that I could not withdraw myself from your service by my own will, nor seek to be withdrawn from it unless that

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<sup>395</sup> *Proslogion* 11; Schmitt 1:109; p. 94. In this same work, Anselm also declared his rejection of any limitations on God’s omnipotence; see 7; Schmitt 1:105-6; p. 90.

<sup>396</sup> “*Iustitia igitur est rectitudo voluntatis propter se servata*”; *De Veritate* 12; Schmitt 1:194; p. 169.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 13; Schmitt 1:199; p. 174.

<sup>398</sup> *De Libertate Arbitrii* 8; Schmitt 1:220; p. 187.

<sup>399</sup> VA 88, n. 1; Ep. 207.

<sup>400</sup> *De Incarnatione Verbi* 10; Schmitt 2:27; p. 251.



disposition and obedience to which I was previously servant according to the will of God forced me to do so.<sup>401</sup>

Anselm maintained that only God can rightfully have a will that is subject to no other will; "therefore," he concluded, "all who exercise their will as their own strive to be like God by robbery and are guilty of depriving God of the dignity proper to him. . . ."<sup>402</sup> From this conclusion, it was only a small step to infer that the legitimacy of a ruler sprung from the subordination of his will to God in upholding justice. A king who went against the will of God was one who had usurped God's authority. For Anselm, this idea was the product of decades of reflection. As John McIntyre argues, in Anselm "the premises of the later works can be shown to be the conclusions of the earlier. . . . St. Anselm is a most systematic theologian, and his writings form a very precise progression."<sup>403</sup>

Anselm's theological worldview was wedded to his experiences as a monk living under the Benedictine Rule. As a prior, he wrote to a monk of Beauvais who wanted to leave his own monastery and come to Bec. He praised the monk for the seriousness of his intentions but warned him of where his obedience lay:

The fact . . . that you intend going somewhere where you can live according to your intention I praise and encourage. But I warn you in advance that if you want to gain the monk's reward, you do this only with the permission of your abbot, and that wherever God may direct your path you live a regular life in obedience to an abbot and not according to the free choice of your own will. . . .<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Ep. 156.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> *St. Anselm and His Critics: A Re-Interpretation of the Cur Deus Homo* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1954), 35.

<sup>404</sup> Ep. 38.

This obedience, however, was ultimately an obedience to the commands and will of God;<sup>405</sup> thus, the commands of superiors were always to be obeyed, unless these orders were against the commands of God. Anselm explained the complexities of this approach to obedience in a letter to a fellow prior who sharply disagreed with his abbot. The prior should seek to explain his views to his superior, but “if he will not concede this to you, it is better for you to bear the burden, even unprofitably, in obedience, than to cast it off impatiently in disobedience.” The subordinate may very well be right, but the default position is obedience, and the abbot holds the position of authority: “For since the prime responsibility was entrusted to him, not to you, you will not be held responsible if, through the fault of a shepherd who ignored your advice, the flock is not governed well.”<sup>406</sup> The only exception is if the superior would undermine the very foundation upon which his commands are based:

*As long as he does not force you to turn from good to evil, it is not advisable for you to dare to disregard the vow of submission and stability you once professed by changing your abode, except with his consent, as long as you can envisage any reason or opportunity that would enable you to somehow live well under his authority. If his headship is any way a hindrance to your endeavors, yet does not block the way of salvation, it is better that, being judged unworthy of greater grace by the hidden judgment of God and your sins you live humbly without sin with fewer blessings than strive to greater ones by mortal sin. For no one ought willingly to risk death unless he cannot otherwise evade a worse death.*<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> He wrote to Bishop Hernost of Rochester, who was dying, “For because it always pleases God if we never fall away from his commands, we particularly please him greatly if, even in our adversity, we joyfully consent to his will. And although he is utterly just, nevertheless, as he is utterly merciful, he will in no way compel us, whom he sees facing up to punishment in this world with joyfulness of spirit, to pay for our sins through repeated punishment in the life to come”; Ep. 53.

<sup>406</sup> Anselm here recalls the language of the Benedictine Rule: “The abbot must, therefore, be aware that the shepherd will bear the blame wherever the father of the household finds that the sheep have yielded no profit”; *The Rule of Saint Benedict* 2:7.

<sup>407</sup> Ep. 6, italics mine.

This letter from 1071 shows Anselm already thinking about the same themes with regard to obedience that mark his theology as well as his own stormy archiepiscopate: the paramount importance of obedience; the burdens of responsibility; the necessity to understand that the proper source of all lawful orders lay in God; the danger of disobedience, which supplants God's will with one's own; and the conviction that disobeying an order can only be justified by obeying a higher principle, the Principle of all things, God. By 1093, Anselm would be much clearer about bishops who had usurped God's authority: "Just as bishops maintain their authority as long as they are in agreement with Christ, so they have it taken away from them when they are in disagreement with Christ."<sup>408</sup> Anselm's experiences as archbishop would soon lead him to apply the same reasoning to the secular power.

Anselm was working on *Cur Deus Homo* during his struggles with Rufus, finishing it shortly after the start of his exile.<sup>409</sup> The underlying theme of *Cur Deus Homo* was obedience, and Anselm also had something quite direct to say about secular authority. In one noteworthy passage, Anselm attempts to reconcile the biblical maxim that vengeance belongs to the Lord<sup>410</sup> with the fact that secular authorities clearly do take vengeance. "When earthly powers take vengeance in this way," Anselm asserts, "in accordance with right, it is the Lord himself, by whom they have been appointed for the task, who is acting."<sup>411</sup> That is, the authority of the king, emperor, or duke is entirely

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<sup>408</sup> Ep. 162.

<sup>409</sup> VA 88, n. 1, 107.

<sup>410</sup> Hebrews 10:30.

<sup>411</sup> "Nam cum terranae potestates hoc recte faciunt, ipse facit, a quo ad hoc ipsum sunt ordinatae"; CDH I.12; Schmitt 2:70; p. 285.

dependent on whether that ruler follows the will of God, with the unspoken corollary that a ruler who is unjust has no legitimacy, for he has usurped God's authority.

In a letter written just before the Council of Rockingham, Anselm expressed this same idea to Count Robert II of Flanders: "The more the power of those to whom the earth is entrusted to be ruled asserts itself," Anselm warned Robert, "the more they throw it into confusion and burden it with their violence if they deviate from justice and do not guide or help the human race."<sup>412</sup> To Anselm, the more power one has, the greater one's responsibility to uphold justice and the greater the danger if one did not, an idea found in the Benedictine Rule.<sup>413</sup> Anselm's letters to the kings of Ireland and Jerusalem, Countess Clementia of Flanders, Count Humbert of Savoy, as well as Henry I reflect the same approach to secular rule.<sup>414</sup> In words strikingly similar to those with which Gilbert Crispin would admonish his superior, Anselm warned Henry that God would hold the king accountable for the church now that he had usurped control of it: "God will not merely demand of you whatever royal power owes him but also whatever pertains to the office of the Primate of England. This burden is too much for you. . . . No man subjects himself to God's law with greater advantage than the King, and no man disregards his law at greater risk."<sup>415</sup>

By the time of the Investiture Contest, Anselm was writing of "evil princes" who trample upon the Church, "to their own eternal damnation." When these rulers "disdain to be obedient to the decrees of the Pope," he declared, "they prove to be disobedient to

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<sup>412</sup> Ep. 180.

<sup>413</sup> "The abbot must always remember what he is and remember what he is called, aware that more will be expected of a man to whom more has been entrusted"; *The Rule of Saint Benedict in English*, 2.30.

<sup>414</sup> Epp. 235, 249, 262, 319, 427.

<sup>415</sup> Ep. 319.

the apostle Peter, as whose deputy he acts, indeed to our Lord Christ, who entrusted his Church to Peter.”<sup>416</sup> If Gregorian elements found their way into Anselm’s later thought, it was only by resonating with a theme he had been working on for decades.

“When Anselm wrote the *Cur Deus Homo*,” Evans notes, “when the strains of keeping order in the real world were already only too apparent to him, he was still as sure as ever of the main elements in a theology of right order.”<sup>417</sup> Obedience was the central question at Rockingham, and obedience provided Anselm with his approach to the Atonement. The Atonement was the highest expression of obedience, made necessary by the Fall, man’s supreme act of disobedience. As Christ proclaimed, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”<sup>418</sup>

In *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm regarded Christ’s death on the cross as in one sense necessary, but he rejected the notion that it could therefore not be a volitional act. Distinguishing between antecedent and consequent necessity, Anselm asserted that it was not external necessity that *compelled* Christ’s obedience, but rather his obedience that decreed the necessity; “he laid down his own soul not obligatorily but by the free exercise of his power.”<sup>419</sup> It was not that the prophecies of Christ’s sacrifice made it necessary, but rather that these prophecies only existed because the things they spoke of were going to be. “In this way, therefore,” Anselm concluded, “no one took his life from him, but he

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<sup>416</sup> Ep. 262.

<sup>417</sup> Evans, “Anselm and Keeping Order,” 21.

<sup>418</sup> John 6:38.

<sup>419</sup> “*non necessitate sed libera potestate animam suam posuit*”; CDH II.16; Schmitt 2:120; p. 341.

himself laid it down and took it up again, because he had the 'power to lay down his life and take it up again', as he himself says."<sup>420</sup>

In Gilbert Crispin's own work on the Atonement, *Disputatio Iudei et Christiani*, the abbot of Westminster offered a quite different interpretation. Following Augustine's approach in *De Trinitate*, Gilbert granted the devil a certain jurisdiction over man, a subjection that could only be broken by one who was without sin; in punishing the sinless, the devil would forfeit his jurisdiction. If it were anyone other than God himself, man would then owe a dual allegiance, to this redeemer and to God, but this would not be the original state of man, in which God was his only lord.<sup>421</sup> Anselm agreed with Gilbert that if man were to be redeemed by anyone else but God, he would not have been restored to his original dignity,<sup>422</sup> but he rejected the notion that the devil could have had any kind of claim over humanity, for "neither the devil nor man belongs to anyone but God, and . . . neither stands outside God's power. . . ."<sup>423</sup> Anselm accepted no limitations on God's power nor any need for the Almighty to abide by some notion of fair play in dealing with the devil: "What action did God need to take," he wrote, "with . . . someone who was his own, apart from punishing this bonds slave [*servus*] of his who had persuaded

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<sup>420</sup> Ibid., II.17; Schmitt 2:125-6; p. 347 (John 10:18). This passage reveals a difference between the obedience imposed by secular authority and sustained by force, and the obedience to God's will freely taken upon oneself, most clearly seen in the monastic life. Anselm generally espoused the Augustinian view of secular authority, in which the fallen state of man makes it necessary for such compulsion to exist. Like Augustine, Anselm believed that secular power was legitimate to the extent it upheld justice; see CDH I.12; Schmitt 2:70; p. 285; Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. John O'Meara (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), IV.4; p. 139.

<sup>421</sup> Gilbert Crispin, *The Works of Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster*, ed. Anna Sapir Abulafia and G. R. Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), sec. 101.

<sup>422</sup> CDH I.5; Schmitt 2:52; p. 270.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid., I. 7; Schmitt 2:56; p. 272.

his fellow-bondslave to desert his master and come over to him . . . ?”<sup>424</sup> Jasper Hopkins points out how crucial this difference is:

Anselm admits a sense in which Satan stole man from God and in which man is in captivity to Satan and to sin. What Anselm objects to in the Augustinian theory is its insistence that the purpose of the incarnation was to effect the salvation of man *by dealing with Satan justly*. If man’s redemption were only or essentially a question of dealing with Satan, Anselm teaches, then God could have accomplished this without Himself having taken on human form.<sup>425</sup>

Christ’s death was not a ransom to pay off the devil, but rather the only way the *rectus ordo*, the right order, of the universe could be restored. Anselm begins “with a hypothesis,” according to Evans:

Anselm says he will set out to show that even if Christ were taken out of the equation altogether, it would be necessary to bring him back in so as to give a coherent account of the manner in which the human race was able to be restored to the position and purpose for which God created it. This was an experiment to see whether “right order” would indeed prove to require that things would fall out in a certain way. Important here is Anselm’s continuing assumption that there is a rightness to things, a *rectitudo*, a divine harmony, which is divinely ordained and cannot ultimately be frustrated, for God is omnipotent and he always wills what is right.<sup>426</sup>

Developing an idea from *De Incarnatione Verbi*, Anselm argued that humanity had created this debt through its sinful disobedience, since “all the will of a rational creature ought to be subject to the will of God.”<sup>427</sup> Man it was who owed this debt, but no one but God could possibly pay such an enormous debt; hence the necessity for a God-man who by his human nature would rightfully make this payment and by his divine

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<sup>424</sup> “*Quam causam debuit agree dues cum suo . . . nisi ut servum suum puniret, qui suo conserve communem dominum deserere et ad se transpire persuasisset. . . ?*”; *ibid.*, I.7; Schmitt 2:56-7; p. 272.

<sup>425</sup> Jasper Hopkins, *A Companion to the Study of Saint Anselm* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), 189-90.

<sup>426</sup> Evans, “Anselm and Keeping Order,” 11.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, I.11; Schmitt 2:68; p. 283.

person was capable of doing so.<sup>428</sup> Thus, Christ's death on the cross was necessary for redemption, but at the same time it was voluntary, since Christ was always capable of saving His life.<sup>429</sup> Christ thus not only redeemed humanity; He set for it the supreme example of obedience: "When Christ endured with kindly patience the sufferings . . . which were inflicted on him because of the righteousness which . . . he was obediently maintaining," Anselm declared, "he set an example to mankind, the purpose of which was that people should not turn aside . . . from the righteousness [*iustitia*] which they owe to God."<sup>430</sup> As Hopkins wrote:

This man who is also God will be able to offer to God a gift which He does not personally owe—a gift which will honor God to such an extent as to count as payment for all men's sins. This gift can only be the voluntary submission to death for the sake of justice. Since this man, Jesus, is fully just, He is not obliged to die. Therefore, His death, unlike the death of all other men, can be meritorious.<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Ibid., II.18; Schmitt 2:126-7; p. 348.

<sup>429</sup> "Similarly, in the case of saving one's life, there is the capacity for wishing to save one's life and the capacity for saving it. When, therefore, the question is asked whether the same God-Man [*deus-homo*] could have saved his life, so as never to die, it is not a matter for doubt that he always had the capacity for saving it, even though he was not capable of wishing to save it, so as never to die. And since this was something he had inherent in him [*et quoniam hoc a se ipso habuit*—I mean, this inability to have this wish—he laid down his soul not obligatorily but by the free exercise of His power"; *ibid.*, II.16; Schmitt 2:120; p. 341. Lest the reader think that Anselm, in declaring Christ was not capable of wishing to save His life, was limiting the divine power in some way, recall his *Proslogion*, where Anselm argues that the capacity to be corrupted, to tell lies, etc., are not abilities, but lack of abilities, or impotence (*impotentia*). "When someone is said to have the 'power' of doing or suffering something which is not to his advantage or which he ought not to do [*aut patiendi quod sibi non expedit aut quod non debet*], then by 'power' here we mean 'impotence', for the more he has this 'power', the more adversity and perversity have power over him and the more he is powerless against them. Therefore, Lord God, You are the more truly omnipotent since You can do nothing through impotence and nothing can have power against You"; *Proslogion* 7; Schmitt 1:105-6; p. 90.

<sup>430</sup> *CDH* II.18; Schmitt 2:127; p. 349. For an analysis of the continuity of Anselm's approach with the patristic writers, see Kevin A. McMahon, "The Cross and the Pearl: Anselm's Patristic Doctrine of the Atonement," *Saint Anselm—His Origins and Influence*, ed. John R. Fortin. (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 57-69.

<sup>431</sup> Hopkins, 194-5. According to Richard Campbell, "It is essential to the logic of Anselm's position that this restitution of *rectitudo* be for its own sake, and not just to assuage God's injured sense of honour, as some critics would have it. Only *rectitudo* of will kept for its own sake is *iustitia*; that had been established in *De Veritate*." "The Conceptual Roots of Anselm's Soteriology," 263.



At Rockingham, Anselm had argued that there was no inherent conflict between what he owed to Caesar and what he owed to Christ, although he had adroitly put the burden of proof on his opponents. Upon finishing *Cur Deus Homo*, he had found the reason why there could be no such conflict: Caesar could never claim what was owed to Christ, for Christ's jurisdiction was, in the final analysis, total. Anything decreed by Caesar that partook of justice in the slightest could only come from Christ as part of God's vision of *rectus ordo*. His remarks on the nature of oaths explain why political authorities could never compel one to do something inherently immoral: in doing so, the authorities would lose the very foundation of their legitimacy.

Anselm thus arrived at a conclusion which, while it grew organically out of his theology, owed much to the debates at Rockingham, as well. It was an argument he may very well have developed had he remained abbot of Bec, but it is doubtful whether it would have had the clarity and immediacy it did without the struggles of Anselm's troubled archbishopric. As Evans points out:

In episode after episode as archbishop, Anselm began to notice conflict of loyalty and obligation of a sort he had never needed to be aware of before, ranging far more widely than his conflict with the king but given focus by his new consciousness that his duties or keeping order no longer look inward to the proper conduct of the domestic life of a monastery, but outward to relations in the wider world.<sup>432</sup>

As his letter to Hugh of Lyon makes clear, Anselm knew before going to the Council that he would not abjure his obedience to the pope, but in *Cur Deus Homo*, he had a theological justification for what, in the context of Rufus' policies, appeared to be civil disobedience. For Anselm, however, it was not a matter of disobeying secular

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<sup>432</sup> Evans, "Anselm and Keeping Order," 15.

authority, but of obeying God; it was a way to clarify to whom one owed ultimate obedience. Augustine had dealt with the same problem in one of his sermons:

Consider these several grades of human powers. If the magistrate enjoin any thing, must it not be done? Yet if his order be in opposition to the Proconsul, then dost not surely despise the power, but choosest to obey a greater power. Nor in this case ought the less to be angry, if the greater be preferred. Again, if the Proconsul himself enjoin any thing, and the Emperor another thing, is there any doubt, that disregarding the former, we ought to obey the latter? So then if the Emperor enjoin one thing, and God another, what judge ye?<sup>433</sup>

Augustine's next words in the sermon were a dialogue presenting the circumstances in which such a conflict may arise: "Pay me tribute, submit thyself to my allegiance," says the ruler, and an undivided allegiance is exactly what Rufus demanded of Anselm. The Christian responds: "Right, but not in an idol's temple. In an idol's temple He forbids it." For Anselm, who clearly accepted the Petrine doctrine that the pope was the vicar of St. Peter and, in accordance with the Benedictine Rule, regarded his religious superior as Christ, to disavow his obedience to the pope was tantamount to renouncing his own Christianity. "It is indeed certain," he wrote to Count Robert, "that whoever does not obey the regulations of the Roman Pontiff, made for the protection of the Christian religion, is being disobedient to the apostle Peter whose vicar he is, nor does he belong to the flock which was entrusted to him by God."<sup>434</sup>

When the ruler in Augustine's dialogue is rebuffed, he demands, "Who forbids it?" "A greater Power," answers the Christian, and he is defiant: "Pardon me then: thou threatenest a prison, He threateneth hell." While to many of the Anglo-Norman bishops, the king's power to wound was far more tangible than anything wielded by the distant

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<sup>433</sup> Augustine, *Sermons* 72:13; *The Political Writings of St. Augustine*, ed. Henry Paolucci (Washington, D. C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1962), 311.

<sup>434</sup> Ep. 248.

pope, to Anselm the reverse was rather true. "Whoever tramples on her [the Church] will be trampled underfoot, outside of her, with the devils," he wrote to Count Humbert of Savoy, "but whoever glorifies her will be glorified in her and with her among the angels."<sup>435</sup> As Augustine enjoined, "whatsoever an angry man in power can take from thee, count only among thy superfluities. . . . Yea even this life itself to those whose thoughts are of another life, this present life, I say, may be reckoned among the things superfluous."<sup>436</sup>

One must resist, therefore, the temptation to replace the role of God's will here with the individual conscience, giving the whole proposition a modern flavor that would be out of place. Conscience was but one means of discerning God's will, possibly the least reliable,<sup>437</sup> and while Anselm thought it very difficult to identify what God wanted, he certainly thought he should include the guidance of Scripture, fellow men of God, and his superiors, foremost among whom was the Supreme Pontiff.<sup>438</sup> As much as he might disagree with this or that decision of the pope, he quite clearly felt himself duty-bound to obey the pope in all his apostolic authority.<sup>439</sup> He also felt bound to obey the revealed Word of God in the Bible,<sup>440</sup> which told him, through Samuel, that obeying the voice of

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<sup>435</sup> Ep. 262.

<sup>436</sup> Augustine, 312.

<sup>437</sup> In a letter to another monk, for instance, Anselm declares, "Therefore, dearest friend, trust more to your friends' advice than in your own deliberation, unless you consider yourself wiser than all of them"; Ep. 17.

<sup>438</sup> "Since . . . it is written that God prefers obedience to sacrifice, and that patience has its perfect work you seek and receive advice nowhere more rightly than from someone to whom you owe obedience, and you serve no one more perfectly than when you hold firmly to patience. . . . The basis of your whole life should rest on these two pillars, namely, obedience and patience." Ep. 73.

<sup>439</sup> Epp. 248, 262.

the Lord is more precious than any other offering (I Samuel 15:22). As a monk, he had regarded his abbot as Christ, in accordance with the Benedictine Rule.<sup>441</sup> "When I professed myself a monk," he wrote in 1093, "I denied myself to myself, so that from then on . . . I would not live according to my own will but only according to obedience. True obedience indeed is either to God or to the Church of God and, after God, above all to [religious] superiors."<sup>442</sup> It was not up to the individual to determine what was inherently immoral or which laws could be disregarded. Obedience was the guiding principle of Anselm's thought and his actions; "nobody will reach the heavenly kingdom except through obedience," he declared.<sup>443</sup>

Shortly after the Council of Rockingham, Anselm wrote to the monks of Bec, encouraging them in their devotion, and he emphasized the importance of obedience. Repeating the injunction of the Benedictine Rule, wherein the superior of the monastery is to be received as Christ, Anselm exhorted, "For the more confidently subjects submit themselves to his [Christ's] vicar, the more generously does he attend to everything for superior and subjects."<sup>444</sup> Both Eadmer's account as well as Anselm's own letters show that he clearly regarded Pope Urban II as his religious superior, as the vicar of Christ.

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<sup>440</sup> See, for instance, *De Concordia* III.6; Schmitt 2:271-2; p. 460: "In fact we proclaim what is useful for the salvation of souls only what Sacred Scripture, made fecund by the marvellous activity of the Holy Spirit, has produced or contains in its womb. For if at times we assert by a process of reasoning a conclusion which we cannot explicitly cite from the saying of Scripture or demonstrate from the bare wording, still it is by using Scripture that we know in the following way whether the affirmation should be accepted or rejected. . . . It is when Sacred Scripture either clearly affirms or in no wise denies it, that it gives support to the authority of any reasoned conclusion." See also Coloman Etienne Viola, "Authority and Reason in Saint Anselm's Life and Thought," AABC.

<sup>441</sup> *The Benedictine Rule*, 2.2.

<sup>442</sup> Ep. 156

<sup>443</sup> Ep. 231.

<sup>444</sup> Ep. 199.

Anselm told the monks of Bec to observe the orders of their superior “as if they were divinely inspired,” and there is every reason to believe that he held the pope’s orders in the same regard. Disobedience amounted to doubting Providence: “For where subjects become the judges of their superiors they openly disparage and contradict the command of God, by whose plan he has been placed above them.” The consequences of such disobedience were dire: “From such people God withdraws the help of his guidance and permits them to be thrown headlong into the result of their own errors.”<sup>445</sup>

Anselm’s words show a new understanding of dual allegiance. At Rockingham, it had troubled him when the Anglo-Norman bishops told him he could not be loyal to Urban, whom Rufus had yet to recognize, without sacrificing his loyalty to the king and his *usus atque leges*. Even at the end of the council, this issue was never resolved; although Anselm eventually received his pallium, it was only through the negotiations between Rufus and papal legates, without Anselm’s knowledge. The Anglo-Norman bishops were right in thinking that a dual allegiance, in the true sense of the term, contained a latent contradiction. Years, decades, even centuries might pass before this dormant quality might become visible, but the Gregorian Reform, spearheaded by an activist papacy, brought this contradiction to the fore wherever it existed.

Anselm, while he knew that he would never sacrifice his plighted obedience to Urban, was uncomfortable at Rockingham with the idea that there was no way to reconcile this prior obedience with his duties to the king of England. By October of 1097, however, he was clearly more confident in predicating his temporal allegiance to his spiritual one, for he had arrived at a solid understanding of the nature of his oath to the king: this oath could never threaten his papal allegiance, for the legitimacy of the

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

temporal oath arose from his continued faith and allegiance to God and His Church. Without this foundation, it was a mere wisp, a fleeting shadow. Thus, Anselm's allegiance to the pope was absolute, insofar as the pope was acting in his capacity as the Vicar of St. Peter, while his allegiance to the king was contingent upon its compatibility with his papal allegiance. Since the first oath was absolute, the second only contingent, this was not truly a dual allegiance. In Richard Southern's words, Anselm "believed that a total commitment was the only acceptable relationship between Man and God. . . . The place of obedience in human life was first fixed in his early monastic letters, brought to completion in his systematic theology in the *Cur Deus Homo*, and tested in his public life as archbishop of Canterbury. . . ."<sup>446</sup> This total commitment to the ultimate source of allegiance, which underlies so much of *Cur Deus Homo*, was Anselm's solution to the problem of dual allegiance.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Southern, *Portrait*, 217.

<sup>447</sup> There is a modern situation that bears some similarities to Anselm's elucidation of the problem. Members of the U.S. military swear to an allegiance that would, at first, appear to be dual. In the oath of enlistment, for instance, one swears to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic," and to "bear true faith and allegiance" to the Constitution. On the other hand, one also swears to "obey the orders of the President of the United States" and the orders of superior officers (the oath for commissioned officers is slightly different, but while it contains no explicit reference to the President, it does pledge one to "well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office" one holds, and the President and Commander-in-Chief ultimately establishes those duties). Theoretically, the orders of superior officers or even the President could contradict basic constitutional principles, and it is not difficult to imagine a political crisis which would bring this apparent contradiction home to every member of the military. Not unlike the situation facing Anselm, the more "temporal" allegiance, in this case to the Commander-in-Chief and superior officers, seems more immediate and tangible than the "spiritual" obligation to uphold the Constitution.

In truth, however, there is ultimately no contradiction here, no question of divided loyalty, and the reason is the same one at which Anselm arrived. The President's authority as Commander-in-Chief derives from Article 2, Section 2 of the Constitution, and the same is thus true for any officers the President may appoint. There can be, then, no situation which permits a service-member to disavow the Constitution and follow the Commander-in-Chief, since the President's entire legitimacy springs from the Constitution. Similarly, in his letters and in *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm argued that the legitimacy of a king sprung from his willingness to uphold justice, to adhere to the will of God (Epp. 180, 235, 249, 262, 319, 427; CDH I.12; Schmitt 2:70; p. 285). This arrangement was confirmed by the oath to the king, predicating one's faithfulness to the king on the faith one owes to God. Here, too, there could be no situation which obligates one to disavow the Vicar of St. Peter and follow the king's orders, since such an act would undermine the foundation of the oath's claim to bind. In both cases, what initially appears to be a dual allegiance, with a

Anselm was certainly not advocating the position later articulated by Pope Boniface VIII in *Unam Sanctam*, namely, that all temporal power is instituted by and exercised “through the will and sufferance” of the pope as head of the Church.<sup>448</sup> It would be well over a hundred years before papal administration would advance to the point where such a position was even tenable. Anselm simply realized that no Christian could be compelled to follow an irreligious law by an oath predicated on faith toward God: “God forbid I say, that any Christian should hold or defend customs which are known to be contrary to God and to right.”<sup>449</sup> Anselm was not stating that the king’s authority sprung from the pope’s; rather, he claimed that vowing not to see his religious superior was one of the things that were “contrary to God.” Thus, Anselm’s strict adherence to papal obedience was a prerequisite for his later adherence to the Gregorian decrees at the Council of Rome, and so his conflicts with William Rufus set the stage for the Investiture Contest with Henry I.

### *Conclusion*

It would be a mistake to regard Anselm’s actions, as some historians have done, as a simple matter of expedience. To believe that *Cur Deus Homo* or, for that matter, Anselm’s behavior during the process of his election as archbishop, was a justification for a course of action already decided upon would be to stand things on their head. The central place of obedience and its thoroughly religious nature in Anselm’s thought preceded by far his appointment as archbishop. On the contrary, it was his religious

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potential for conflict hidden within, is actually a single, undivided allegiance to the ultimate source of legitimacy.

<sup>448</sup> Tierney, 189.

<sup>449</sup> HN 84-5.

convictions and theological conclusions that provided the basis for his policies, and his experiences as archbishop clearly enriched his theological thinking, accelerating the development of ideas found in his earlier writings.<sup>450</sup> It was no accident that Anselm's greatest exploration of obedience and the consequences of disobedience was written in the midst of his struggles with William Rufus.

The contrasting view, that Anselm's piousness essentially precluded any capacity for coherent policy, overlooks the evidence that the same insight and mental acuity Anselm developed as a theologian served him well in his disputes with the king and the English episcopate. This was no secret to Osbern, an Anglo-Saxon monk who spent some time at Bec, who wrote to Anselm in 1093, urging him to accept the archbishopric:

For there are many who have always labored toward the destruction of the church, who now consider how greatly they will hold sway, saying that you will always act with God, not taking care of the possessions of the church—as if taking care of the possessions of the church is not acting with God! But, with God's help, when they recognize you as I do now, I think they will speak and think differently.<sup>451</sup>

Above all, however, Anselm's determination to strengthen the English church and his obedience to the pope, a faith now fortified by reason, explain his remarkable tenacity in resisting two kings of England. The three decades Anselm spent as a monk and theologian were a well he would return to, as archbishop, again and again. Thus, every investigation of Anselm's theology has the potential to enrich historical scholarship, to add to what we know of Anselm's view of the world. In regard to one important aspect of that world, it is clear that Anselm's highly developed and deeply felt sense of *obedience* gave him the moral strength to resist the king and defend the Church.

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<sup>450</sup> See Evans, "Anselm and Keeping Order in the Real World," 21.

<sup>451</sup> Ep. 149.



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